

SACRAMENTAL DISCIPLESHIP AS A PATHWAY TO ECCLESIAL  
REFORMATION IN THE FREE METHODIST CHURCH IN CANADA

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF  
GORDON-CONWELL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

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MAY 2011

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## PREFACE

The church I pastor is coming through a most difficult ministry season. One member experienced “prophetic dreams.” She insisted that, if we did not listen to her, the church would be “destroyed.” A second member accused a leader of a moral issue (non-sexual). The elders and other leaders investigated the allegations, determined them to be false and, in fact, the accuser to be in the wrong.<sup>1</sup> The person, however, stubbornly maintained her position. In both cases the church leadership approached the people with compassion and with a desire to resolve these issues. When the leadership offered steps of reconciliation, the first person and, months later, the second person declined. Both opted to do what many North American Christians naturally do: look for another church.

Our leaders discussed at length the idea that the Apostle Paul would not do well in most western churches. He would wonder where our authority had gone (Hebrews 13:17). He would look for the restorative gift of discipline (Galatians 6:1), the value of a united body (1 Corinthians 12), the beauty of mutual submission (Ephesians 5:21), and the respect for leadership (1 Timothy 3:1). The Canadian Church, it would seem, continues to struggle with these values, partly and deservedly because it has abused them, and partly because the prevailing culture naturally resists these biblical patterns (spiritual authority, discipline, unity, mutual submission, etc.):<sup>2</sup>

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. *Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world*, [italics mine] but let God transform you into

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<sup>1</sup>The Barrie Free Methodist Church elders / board “tested” with the following grid: 1. Scripture; 2. Prayer and fasting; 3. “Fruit test” in each party’s life: a) fruit of the Spirit and b) harvest fruit; 4. Appeal to the larger body of Christ (denomination, network of pastors, and discussion with other church and para-church leaders).

<sup>2</sup>Unless otherwise stated all Scripture references will be from the New International Version of the Bible.

a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.<sup>3</sup>

The church is constantly confronted by “the patterns of this world” that include rigorous independence and individuality, entitlement, materialism, and consumerism. Christians must stop conforming and start inviting more of God's transforming grace. How will this transformation occur? Christian thinker Soren Kierkegaard wrote that “Christ came into the world with a purpose of saving it, not instructing it. At the same time – as is implied in his saving work – he came to be the *pattern*, to leave footprints for the person who would join him, who would become a follower.”<sup>4</sup> Christ is building the church as a footprint to follow. Church family<sup>5</sup> is His solution, and God's Kingdom ethic is the new pattern.

I belong to the Free Methodist Church in Canada (FMCIC). I believe the local church can be redeemed into the dynamic powerhouse we are called to be. The transformation the church must undergo requires a journey of rediscovery: rediscovering church reformation; rediscovering discipleship which was an essential component of the first one hundred years of the Methodist movement; and rediscovering gifts from Jesus that nurture church family, as we are as Methodists a sacramental people. These rediscoveries will enable Christians to be worshipers and missionaries for God. Specifically, the gift of Holy Communion which, as a movement, we believe is more than

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<sup>3</sup>Romans 12: 1-2 (NLT). The NIV uses the term “patterns of this world”.

<sup>4</sup>Soren Kierkegaard, *Provocations: Spiritual Writings of Kierkegaard* (Farmington, PA: The Plough Publishing House, 1999), 85.

<sup>5</sup>Church family will be the term used to differentiate the local church from the universal church. Paul the Apostle wrote to the ecclesia generally (universal) and specifically (locally). He chose several images to help believers understand the function of ecclesia including: the Body, an army, and family (the language of children, Father is used, as well marriage where the church is the bride). Church family then is a culturally relevant and doctrinally accurate phrase to help define and discuss a specific local church.

an event. We believe the sacrament of communion is a dynamic encounter with God, and it is the lifestyle of the disciple wherein each believer is a Eucharist to other people<sup>6</sup>. And this sacrament should be reconnected to discipleship: *sacramental discipleship*.

Sacramental discipleship is a pathway to much needed ecclesial reformation.

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<sup>6</sup>Rob Bell and Don Golden, *Jesus Wants to Save Christians: A Manifesto For the Church in Exile* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2008), 158.

## ABBREVIATIONS

BFMC	Barrie Free Methodist Church
Discipleship	an intentional and organic process of formation through loving relationships marked by accountability, commitment, education, and encouragement to serve. Discipleship is lived within the context of church family. The primary purposes of discipleship are to help nurture vital Christian community, to foster proper worship of God and to help believers participate in His mission (worship-mission).
EFC	Evangelical Fellowship of Canada
FMCI	Free Methodist Church in Canada
NCD	Natural Church Development Survey
NIV	New International Version of the Bible
NLT	National Leadership Team of the Free Methodist Church in Canada
WFMC	Whitby Free Methodist Church

## ABSTRACT

In light of declining attendance and conversion patterns in the Free Methodist Church in Canada (FMCIC) this study explored discipleship and sacramental practices as potential avenues of renewal. First a definition of discipleship was developed based on Jesus' model, history and current cultural realities (including a brief exploration of current adult learning theory and organizational theory). Secondly, Eucharistic themes and practice were explored theologically and historically with an emphasis on a Wesleyan world view. In both cases, interviews with FMCIC pastors and leaders were conducted to help establish common practice of discipleship and the Lord's Table in the FMCIC.

The model presented in this study is that discipleship is to be the channel through which the themes of the Eucharist are introduced into a believer's life. The reason discipleship was chosen as a vehicle to introduce the Eucharist is that discipleship impacts the church at her most foundational level: individuals. Change is most effectively accomplished by introducing new information at a micro-level: the organization's basic assumptions. The basic assumptions of any given local church are safeguarded in each individual. Therefore, a discipleship relationship is God's opportunity to input His new Kingdom ethic into the church. Discipleship wed to the themes and practice of the Eucharist, or **sacramental discipleship** is completely accessible to FMCIC, which makes it potentially a potent and immediate reformation opportunity.



## CHAPTER ONE:

### DISSONANCE BETWEEN WHAT SHOULD BE AND WHAT IS

#### **The Problem with Church**

It is the vision of the Free Methodist Church in Canada to see healthy churches within the reach of all people in Canada and beyond.

--FMCIC, *The Manual 2009/2010*

The number of people attending a Free Methodist Church in Canada on any given Sunday has declined in the past ten years. Likewise the number of people indicating a conversion to Christ has been in decline in the same period (see figures 1.1 and 1.2). The FMCIC encourages its congregations to use, as one measure of health the The Natural Church Development (NCD) Survey.<sup>1</sup> NCD is an international effort to examine the health of the body of Christ and to offer “growth principles which are given by God Himself to all His creation.”<sup>2</sup> The survey results indicate that 85 percent of congregations are not healthy – that is, 85 percent of local congregations that responded worldwide fall below the minimal health factor.<sup>3</sup> Only 15 percent of the church is enjoying health. That such a small percentage of the worldwide Body of Christ is functioning well is alarming. A person with body systems operating at only 15 percent would not be considered

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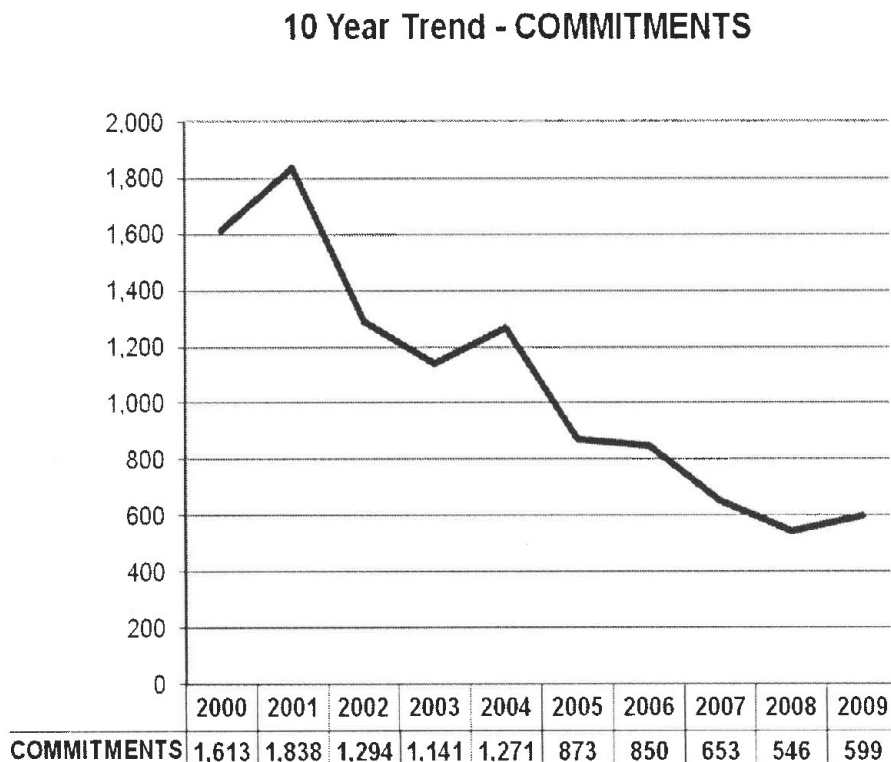
<sup>1</sup>Over 55 000 churches have participated internationally. Besides the NCD survey the Free Methodist Church in Canada offers other measures for local churches to help determine health (see [www.fmcic.ca](http://www.fmcic.ca)). Christian Schwarz, *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches* (Illinois: Church Smart Resources, 1996).

<sup>2</sup>Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 14.

<sup>3</sup>Eight characteristics are considered in the NCD survey, whether for a local church that meets under a tree in Africa or for a mega church in Korea. The eight characteristics include empowering leadership, gift-oriented ministry, passionate spirituality, functional structures, inspiring worship service, holistic small group, need-oriented evangelism, and loving relationships.

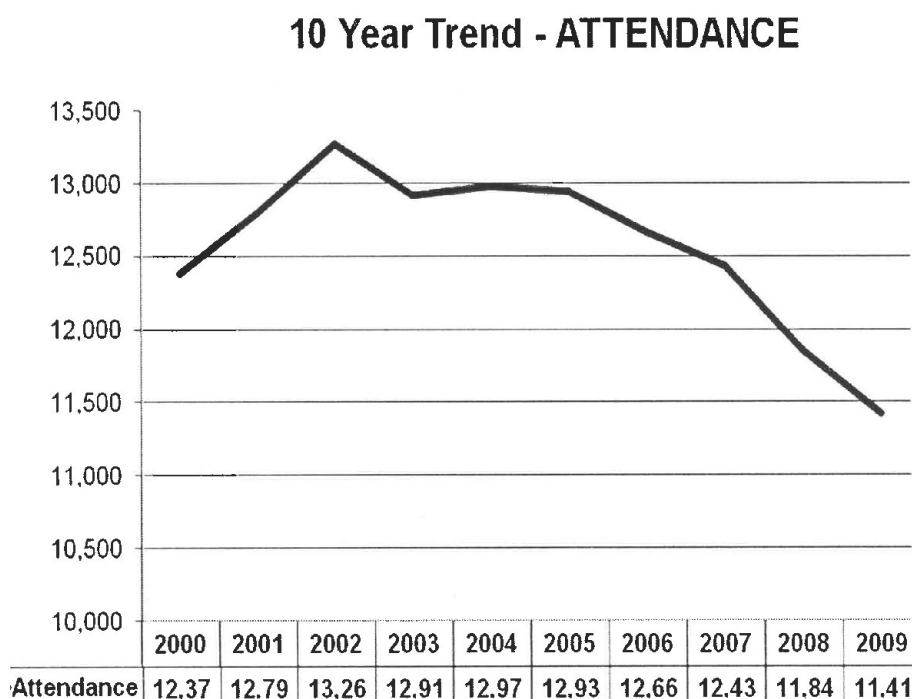
healthy! The current health status of the FMCIC is “not dire but it does require the full attention of local church boards and the National Leadership Team.”<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 1.1 The FMCIC Growth Trends (Commitments)**



<sup>4</sup>Bishop Keith Elford at the September 2010 Minister’s Retreat of the FMCIC. The “National Leadership Team” is comprised of the Bishop, the Director of Personnel, the Director of Growth Ministries, the Director of Administrative Services and the Director of Intercultural and Global Ministries.

**Figure 1.2 The FMCIC Growth Trends (Attendance)**



There are 112 million churchless Christians in the United States, a number which has doubled in the past twenty years.<sup>5</sup> Reggie McNeal believes that “they are not leaving church because they have lost faith” but rather to preserve it. In other words, living within a church community is not nurturing their faith. In the Canadian context, the Christian church is in decline<sup>6</sup> and the government of Canada fully expects this trend to continue. What is the FMCIC doing or not doing that *she*<sup>7</sup> is experiencing these trends

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<sup>5</sup>Reggie McNeal, *The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 4-5.

<sup>6</sup>Canada, “Religious Diversity in Canada”, *Horizons*, vol.10, no.2 [March 2009].

<sup>7</sup>Revelation 21:2 describes the Church as Christ’s bride. Therefore, throughout this project, the Church will be represented by female pronouns: *her, she*.

wherein Christians are not a part of a local church, and non-church people are not coming into community?<sup>8</sup> What needs to change in order to reverse this trend?

At least part of the answer rests in community formation. Community or church family (these two will be used interchangeably) is God's foundational building block for transforming the world. The concept is fleshed out in Paul's first letter to Corinth where he describes followers of Christ as being a "body": "Now you are the body of Christ and each one of you is a part of it".<sup>9</sup> The verse does not say that Christians are "like" the body, but it states the reality that *we are* indeed the body. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes, "Christian brotherhood (community) is not an ideal, but a divine reality."<sup>10</sup> Bonhoeffer also explains that, since community is a spiritual reality and not merely a human one, it is a community like no other community that exists.<sup>11</sup>

Two biblical passages help define Bonhoeffer's "divine reality": 1 Corinthians 11-14 and Matthew 16. Consider Paul's first letter to the Corinthian church. Here community properly understood would be a dynamic fellowship wherein "spiritual gifts" are pursued and practiced with the purpose of nurturing the fellowship and extending the Kingdom (chapter 12); and "love" will be the foundational (or "greatest") mark of the fellowship (chapter 13). Interestingly, Paul's "directives" (chapter 11) about Holy Communion precede the discussion about gifts, body life and love. Undoubtedly, in Paul's train of thought the sacrament of communion (chapter 11), spiritual gifts, body life

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<sup>8</sup> Barna predicts that within 25 years the number of people attending a local church will decrease by 50 percent. George Barna, *Revolution* (US: Tyndale House Publishing, 2005), 49.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:27.

<sup>10</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Faith in Community* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1954), 13.

<sup>11</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 13-14.

(chapter 12), and love (chapter 13) are interconnected and essential components to healthy community.

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus said, “I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven....” Two important truths emerge from this passage. First the church is Jesus’ architectural genius; it is ultimately His responsibility to build and sustain. Second, the church functions as a portal through which God’s Kingdom and its values will enter the world’s value system. Paul reiterates this second truth when he writes, “His intent was that now, through the church the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord”.<sup>12</sup> Church is to be the means through which God is known to the world; consequently cultural assumptions will be transformed into Kingdom “basic assumptions” and patterns of living.<sup>13</sup>

The crux of the problem referred to at the start of this chapter is that the present prevailing culture has created a value system that undermines the ability of believers to function in community.<sup>14</sup> As a result, the community is different than the one described in Scripture. At least two factors have diluted the church culture and created a less potent North American church: syncretism and narcissism.

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<sup>12</sup> Ephesians 3:10-11.

<sup>13</sup> Schein defined culture as a “pattern of shared assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.” Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership: Second Edition* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992), 12.

<sup>14</sup> The authors discuss the dichotomy Americans wrestle with between desiring community involvement and living independent of one another. Robert N. Bellah et al, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 155-162.

## Syncretistic Christianity

...the church culture in North America is a vestige of the original movement, an institutional expression of religion that is in part a civil religion and is in part a club where religious people can hang out with other people whose politics, worldview and lifestyle match theirs.

--Reggie McNeal, *The Present Future*

Anecdotally, a new believer once asked a question that reflects the cultural clash of God's ideal and secular patterns of behaviors: "Acts 2 sounds nice. So how much time will church take me each week?" Ironically, perhaps sadly, the church has acquiesced as she responds with programs, classes, steps, levels (i.e., professional clergy, lay leadership), worship times, and ministries.<sup>15</sup> This response is nothing less than consumerism.<sup>16</sup> The book *Simple Church* asserts that consumerism and cultural values of "bigger and better" have corrupted parts of the body of Christ.<sup>17</sup> Barna contends that Jesus' and subsequently the early church's view of body life is different than the western church's practice.<sup>18</sup> Cultural pollutants do impact the Christian faith journey. Rugged individualism,<sup>19</sup> busy pace of life,<sup>20</sup> and an egocentric worldview corrupt the daily faith walk and are certainly reflective of the Canadian context.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Beckham claims that churches of all sizes are held "hostage by consumer Eddies who are the prime target audience for most twentieth century churches." He argues that church should not be driven by marketing strategies, defining success by Sunday morning attendance. William Beckham, *The Second Reformation: Reshaping the Church for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Houston, TX: Touch Publications. 1995), 45.

<sup>16</sup> Rainer and Geiger surveyed 400 churches. They argue that the "church" is complicated and consumerist and she needs to be invited back to a more simple approach. Four concepts define their simple approach: clarity, movement, alignment and focus. Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples* (Nashville: Band H Publishing Group, 2006), 15.

<sup>17</sup> Rainer and Geiger, *Simple Church*, 20.

<sup>18</sup> Viola and Barna believe that Constantine corrupted the church by making it the state religion. The original design of Jesus for church and the one we operate within today are different. Frank Viola and George Barna, *Pagan Christianity? Exploring the Roots of our Church Practices* (US: Tyndale House Publishing, 2008).

Many Canadians qualify their identity by hyphenation with their nation of origin: Russian-Canadian, Indo-Canadian, and French-Canadian to name a few. They have integrated into their new communities, taken on new values, new lifestyles, new food, music, and so on. Yet, while embracing Canadian-ism, they guard certain values of and affections for their original nationality. In Canada, multi-culturalism is celebrated when it contributes to the greater good and the common values Canadians share.<sup>22</sup>

Has this syncretism entered the Church? The answer is obvious: yes. Christians who live in Canada or the United States are, to the rest of Christendom, “North American-Christians” – hybrids of Christianity. Unfortunately North American-Christianity has embraced consumerism, individualism, deism, practical atheism, and non-connectionalism (non-Catholic spirit<sup>23</sup>). In this case then the hybrid North American

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<sup>19</sup> Belah and his team observed that rugged individualism has in fact damaged society by damaging family. Chapter 6 is dedicated to a full discussion about the impact of individualism in America. Belah et al, *Habits of the Heart*, xxiii.

<sup>20</sup> Barna, *Revolution*, 12.

<sup>21</sup> It would be an interesting biblical-theological study to consider the present popular understanding of a “professional minister” whose job is to come into a particular church to solve problems, preach and bury. Perhaps this theology corrupts community life?

<sup>22</sup> Canadian culture is certainly not monolithic. There is a vast cultural diversity including French, English, First Nations, new Canadians, and of course generational differences. However there are unifying principles and a constitution that all Canadians subscribe to. For further study from a Christian perspective about Canada, church and culture see Reginald Bibby, Sarah Russel & Ron Rolheiser, *The Emerging Millennials: How Canada's Newest Generation is Responding to Change and Choice* (Alberta: Wood Lake Books Inc, 2009). Bibby is a well respected authority on social trends in Canada. See also Don Posterski, Marv Penner & Chris Tompkins, *What's Happening? The State of Youth Ministry in Canada*, <http://www.whatshappeningcanada.com/index.html>, 2009.

<sup>23</sup> “But although a difference in opinions or modes of worship may prevent an entire external union, yet need it prevent our union in affection? Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt, we may. Herein all the children of God may unite, notwithstanding these smaller differences. These remaining as they are, they may forward one another in love and in good works.” John Wesley, “Sermon Thirty-nine: Catholic Spirit,” *The Sermons of John Wesley: 1872 Edition*, ed. Jackson Thomas (Northwest Nazarene University: Wesley Center Online, 1993-2005), I.4.

church has succumbed to the “seductive power of syncretism.”<sup>24</sup> For instance then, because of this fusion of Kingdom values and popular cultural values, the church has become consumeristic.

Economists, politicians, and the media have been analyzing the economy of 2009, keeping it at the forefront of national thinking. Interestingly the term used to describe people and their state of being is predominantly “consumer”. Analysts choose to measure well-being based on the consumer index. Politicians address their constituents as consumers and urge them to buy domestic goods for the benefit of the nation. At some point people became consumers and not citizens.<sup>25</sup> Consider this comment by Rodney Clapp quoted by Joanne Bell: “It is not just consumerism in its most undisguised, hackneyed manifestations that should concern us, but consumerism as an ethos, a character-cultivating way of life that seduces and insinuates and acclimates.” Consumerism has infiltrated the Western ethos; it does define Western lifestyle.

Consumerism makes claims and demands on public resources regardless of greater good; consumerism is focused on self-interest. A consumer understands that “the customer is always right.” A citizen, on the other hand, still has self-interests that are within the context of the greater whole. A citizen’s rights, claims, or demands take into consideration a national context: national pride, national purposes, and national identity. This movement away from understanding our context as a nation of citizens to a nation of consumers has infiltrated the Body of Christ. Because the North American ethos has

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<sup>24</sup>Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 157.

<sup>25</sup>Joanne Bell, Director of Stewardship in the Free Methodist Church in Canada at October 2009 “Minister’s Conference”. For conference notes go to:  
[http://www.generoussteward.org/generous\\_steward/Blog/Entries/2009/10/13\\_2009\\_Ministers\\_Conference\\_Resource\\_Materials.html](http://www.generoussteward.org/generous_steward/Blog/Entries/2009/10/13_2009_Ministers_Conference_Resource_Materials.html).



infected the Body of Christ, a syncretistic faith has been created that is not conducive to St. Paul's consistent developmental word to the church about living in "harmony"<sup>26</sup> with one another. Consumerism does not promote harmony; it promotes self-interest.

Harmony is the stuff of citizenship. Paul uses the concept of citizenship to help describe this Kingdom value: "you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household."<sup>27</sup> To Paul Christianity was not merely a school of philosophy but a nation of citizens working towards the new Kingdom ethic. To be clear, this passage is not suggesting that Christ's Kingdom will eradicate ethnicity. Rather, the Kingdom will embrace all nations and tribes, while rejecting cultural values that are contrary to Kingdom values.

In a comprehensive book about church planting in Canada, researchers observed that "members of a people group do not mix significantly with members of other people groups."<sup>28</sup> The church does not contend well with cultural differences and tastes. This leads us to analyze the anatomy of a Christian community. Does it require one ethnicity, one roof, one format, one style? The book of Revelation describes the nations coming together to celebrate God;<sup>29</sup> however, the sad reality on this side of heaven is that the church comes apart, ethnically and socio-economically, to celebrate Him. Christians should celebrate what is biblically good about their own birth-culture while embracing the new Kingdom culture. Some Kingdom values shine through the church in Canada but

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<sup>26</sup>Romans 12:16 for instance. Paul's concern is for the Church in Rome to understand covenant community. In this particular section "love" is the harmonizing theme the Church is to strive for.

<sup>27</sup>Ephesians 2:19. See also Philippians 3:20.

<sup>28</sup>Jacquelin Dugas, ed., *Transforming Our Nation: Empowering the Canadian Church for a Greater Harvest* (Richmond, BC: Church Leadership Library, 1998), 22.

<sup>29</sup>Revelation 7:9.

the church is also polluted by popular culture, consumerism, biases, prejudices, traditions, ignorance, and sin.

Christian missiologist Lesslie Newbigin uses the word domestication, rather than polluted, to describe the state of Western Christianity.<sup>30</sup> The church has domesticated the teachings of Jesus, which means that His teachings are tame and have become little more than part of the furniture in our society.<sup>31</sup> The church, as Newbigin suggests, must ask: “How far should the gospel be ‘at home’ in a culture, and how far should it resist domestication. What is true contextualization?”<sup>32</sup> In reality, it would appear that the church has poorly contextualized and is, therefore, highly syncretistic.

North American syncretistic Christianity is not conducive to church family building; in fact, the Kingdom of God is a counter-cultural movement. Christianity is not a culture on equal footing with North American culture. The culture of God is perfect, it is right, it has primacy and this Kingdom is all about confronting the world and redeeming it. Stassen and Gushee describe the counter-cultural movement as “praxis of the Kingdom” which means that it is the reversal of worldly values in order that a “new lifestyle of service, servanthood, and humility” is nurtured.<sup>33</sup> The North American church

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<sup>30</sup>Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 144.

<sup>31</sup>For instance the Ten Commandments or the Lord’s Prayer still respectively hang or may be recited in some Canadian municipal legislators. “God keep our land” is a line in the Canadian national anthem that is a reference to the Christian God, but is now taught as an anthem to “whoever or whatever you understand ‘god’ to be” (from a conversation with a high school teacher). These verses of Scripture and prayers are not powerful opportunities with God, and perhaps are not even reminders of Canada’s Christian heritage, but have become fused into more comfortable cultural interpretations.

<sup>32</sup>Contextualization is defined by Newbigin as the process in which the gospel needs to be communicated to the “total context in which people are now living and in which they now have to make their decisions.” Newbigin states that this process recognizes “the forces in every society which are making for change” and a more recent mission awareness that a missionary is not bringing with him the “pure” un-adapted gospel. Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 142.

struggles daily with this tension between worldly values and God's "new" culture; this significant issue prevents healthy community. An additional problem handicaps the church: *herself*.

### **The Narcissistic Church**

Jesus told His disciple-community that, "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden."<sup>34</sup> Illustratively the church is like the city that cannot and should not be hidden. The church in Matthew's Gospel is commissioned throughout the book to go into the world and be a light. This commission is ultimately summed up in chapter twenty eight in the well-known Great Commission. In Matthew, the church is described as disciples loving God, loving each other, and ministering this Gospel message to the world. And the church has existed for two millennia aware of this mandate, but not always staying true to the commission. In its darker moments, the body of Christ naturally wrestles with the potential for a local church to focus her attention inward and consequently attack herself. The book of Proverbs describes what happens when there is no mission or clear corporate understanding of preferable future: "Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint."<sup>35</sup> The Hebrew word *para* (which is translated in the NIV as "cast off restraint") is literally to "let go or let loose".<sup>36</sup> It can be used to describe unbraided hair, or to describe people running wild. In this Proverb passage the

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<sup>33</sup>Glen H. Stassen and David P. Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 2003), 21.

<sup>34</sup>Matthew 5:14.

<sup>35</sup>Proverbs 29:18.

<sup>36</sup>R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer and Bruce K. Waltke *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol.1 and 2 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 736-737.

most probable nuance of the term *para* is that where there is no revelation, the people are undisciplined / [they] get out of hand. Therefore implicit in this verse is that, when there is a clear vision that the people own and participate in, they will not perish, but thrive; they will not *para*, but stay connected to one another, be disciplined and move forward together. Clearly, when vision and subsequently mission are not owned and participated in, then the Body of Christ will *para*.<sup>37</sup>

Congregations erect buildings that isolate themselves from their surrounding communities and from the larger body of Christ.<sup>38</sup> As a result of this type of narcissistic attention, the church can become paralyzed by in-fighting and therefore can become ineffective in communicating the Gospel message. The allegorical novel *The Lord of the Flies*, by Nobel-winning author William Golding, illustrates what happens to a society when guiding moral authority is lost.<sup>39</sup> Stranded on an island, with no higher authority to offer law, morality or rationale, the children implode – they attack one another. Beckham pointedly uses the phrase “church [can] isolate in buildings.” He and so many Christians see the church as existing for her self: isolated, independent of the whole Body, naval gazers, and institutionalized. The antithesis of the church that is inward focused is described in the book of Acts (a church community that, at the time of writing, was approximately twenty-five years old – not a church family in her infancy):

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they

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<sup>37</sup>Eugene Peterson, translator of the *The Message* version of the Bible, takes this definition into account as he insightfully interprets Proverbs 29:18 “if people can’t see what God is doing, they stumble all over themselves”.

<sup>38</sup>Beckham, *Second Reformation*, 57.

<sup>39</sup>William Golding, *The Lord of the Flies* (London: Faber and Faber, 1958).

gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.<sup>40</sup>

### **Ecclesial Reformation**

The church needs to rediscover the dynamic described in Acts 2<sup>41</sup> in order to learn how to live as one harmonious community made up of many nations or cultures. For the church to cleanse herself of syncretism and narcissism, she should be a learning organization, always on a quest to reform herself.<sup>42</sup>

Alan Hirsch offers a thoughtful discussion about reforming the church.<sup>43</sup> His ideas have been a part of the conversation about mission held by the Free Methodist Church in Canada. Hirsch argues that “Christology determines missiology, and missiology determines ecclesiology.”<sup>44</sup> Hirsch explains that Jesus must be the starting point and the “constant reference point”.<sup>45</sup> Through a biblically sound Christology then the believer will learn about missional engagement. He states that missiology “must then go on to

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<sup>40</sup> Acts 2:42-47.

<sup>41</sup> Clearly there are local Christian communities that are living out the lifestyle principles associated to Acts 2. The question of concern here is how to help the whole of the body of Christ – how does the fragmented body of Christ become whole?

<sup>42</sup> The concept of a learning organization is borrowed from Senge’s excellent book. A learning organization will be a healthy one – efficient and successful since it is in a perpetual state of learning or re-forming. Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline* (Toronto: Doubleday Currency, 1990).

<sup>43</sup> Beckham argues thoughtfully that the Church needs to live in a perpetual state of reformation. Beckham, *The Second Reformation*.

<sup>44</sup> Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2006), 143-144.

<sup>45</sup> Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 142.

inform the nature and functions... and forms of the church (ecclesiology)”.<sup>46</sup> He rightly asserts that ecclesiology “must result from the process of contextualizing the gospel in any given culture.” The equation however is not quite right. First of all a more theologically accurate formula begins with the community of the Trinity and not merely a healthy Christology. Then, from a foundationally solid doctrine of Trinity, one can have a healthy Christology, since Christ’s first steps after His baptism was to surround Himself with disciples (His *ekklesia*). Hirsch stated that contextualizing was the function of mission. However, Christ created a culturally relevant *ekklesia* (contextualized) before he sent these disciples to engage missionally. So then mission follows church.<sup>47</sup>

The terms *mission*, *missio dei* and *purpose* will be used interchangeably in this discussion as meaning God’s mission in humanity.<sup>48</sup> Human beings are naturally worshippers and desirous of mission-filled lives.<sup>49</sup> Viktor Frankl introduced a therapeutic approach that is in essence a belief that humanity’s primary motivational force is a search for meaning. Besides his clinical work, Frankl references his experiences in Nazi death camps: how those victims who had meaning or purpose in their life, survived emotionally

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<sup>46</sup>Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 143.

<sup>47</sup>“We can understand the Church only if we relate it to Christ...” Kloppenburg celebrates the Catholic church’s reformation in Vatican II to a more Christocentric shift in which now the church is understood first in relation to Christ. He compares the church-Christ relationship to the moon-sun relationship, where the church shines only as a result of the brilliance of Christ. Boniface Kloppenburg, O.M.F., *The Ecclesiology of Vatican II* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1974), 19-21.

<sup>48</sup>There is a good introduction to the idea of *missio dei* and its focus being in the redemptive work of Christ. Craig Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church: A Community Led by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2007), 18.

<sup>49</sup>Erik Erikson, Sigmund Freud, L. Kohlberg to name a few, each made observations about stages of human development. The final stage includes self-acceptance, fulfillment, maturity (or adulthood), and contentment. Though worship and mission are not words used in these developmental theories, worship and mission certainly mirror the themes observed: mission is, for instance, about fulfillment, and worship is self-awareness in relation to a Sovereign God. (see Richard H. Price, ed., *Principles of Psychology* (Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1987) ; or Kathleen Stassen Berger *The Developing Person Through Childhood and Adolescence*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (New York: Worth Publishing, 1986).

and sometimes beating starvation and abuse to survive physically.<sup>50</sup> God created humanity with a purpose. Rick Warren must have exposed a societal nerve about purpose because his book *Purpose Driven Life* lived in the *New York Times* best seller list for advice longer than any other book.<sup>51</sup> The Bible is quite concerned about helping humanity discover its true identity: God does transform His children into worshippers of God and missionaries.<sup>52</sup> “The primary mission of the church is to love Jesus Christ and to be his Body in the world, continuing the work of the kingdom of God which he began.”<sup>53</sup> Mission is naturally and intricately connected to worship. Donald Goertz defines worship in this way, “I would like to suggest that worship means something very simple; it is our proclamation, celebration and re-enactment of the mighty acts of God in history. This is something that is done with all of our being. It is not merely didactic, but involves mystery and imagination, in short, all that we are”.<sup>54</sup> Goertz explains that to understand worship in this way will help Christians understand worship not merely as a “means of coping with life, or a heightened experience” but worship becomes “the place where we

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<sup>50</sup>Frankl has an excellent discussion about “boredom” and its correlation to discovering meaninglessness – another good discussion for church today: boredom (or lack of mission) leads to problems within church family. Viktor Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning* (Toronto: Pocket Books, 1984), 129.

<sup>51</sup> “By The Numbers: Top-Earning Authors”. *Forbes.com*. [http://www.forbes.com/2006/12/08/top-earning-authors-tech-media\\_cz\\_lg\\_books06\\_1208authors\\_slide\\_5.html](http://www.forbes.com/2006/12/08/top-earning-authors-tech-media_cz_lg_books06_1208authors_slide_5.html). Retrieved on January 10, 2009

<sup>52</sup>The very first command in Exodus is about worship, and the last words of Christ to His disciples in Matthew and Acts are about our mission. To worship is to highly esteem, adore something or someone. People are naturally wired to worship, and the first command invites people to not waste their worship on that which will not last; rather worship God. Matthew 6:33 echoes this idea. Likewise people are wired to desire to be purposeful. Note the tremendous response to Rick Warren’s *Purpose Driven Life*. Again the Bible invites society to be purposeful / missional about that which is eternal and not finite.

<sup>53</sup>Bishop Keith Elford, “Ecclesiology Affirmation: a Position Paper,” *Church for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Grasping onto the Essentials allows for Confident Contextualization* FMCIC Ecclesiology Commission (Toronto: FMCIC, 2006).

<sup>54</sup>Donald Goertz, “Toward A Missional Theology of Worship,” *Theology of Mission*, class notes (Toronto: Tyndale University and Seminary, 2009), 1.

are formed both privately and corporately.”<sup>55</sup> In short, Goertz recognizes the formative value of worship. Worship, in Goertz’s thinking is “naturally missional” where “worship and God’s Kingdom activity come together.”<sup>56</sup>

It is difficult to know where worship ends and mission begins and vice versa; but, for the purposes of this exploration, each will be defined separately. The journey of faith is a transformational journey – or at least it should be – wherein worship and mission that would naturally be directed at ourselves, or anything other than God, begins to be directed *to* and *by* God. In order to be perfectly clear about the goals of developing an orthodox view of Trinity and church, the phrase worship-mission will be used as these two concepts together best define the goal of the Christian faith. Therefore to summarize diagrammatically: Healthy Doctrine of Trinity → Healthy Ecclesiology → Effective Worship-Mission.

Ray Noll seems to agree that “God gives Jesus, Jesus gives the church, the church does word/actions for the people that imbue them with the attitudes and values of Jesus, ultimately challenging them and giving them strength to function as sacraments in their world.”<sup>57</sup> Note that, in Noll’s thinking, the mission of a Christian is tied to the concept of sacramentality. This idea will be further developed shortly.

First though, consider the Trinity as the starting place for healthy community. The Trinity is an example of perfect community. Jesus offers insight into the harmony within the Trinity in John 17: “All I have is yours (Father) and all you have is mine”; “as you

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<sup>55</sup>Goertz, “*Toward A Missional Theology of Worship*”, 2.

<sup>56</sup>Goertz, “*Toward A Missional Theology of Worship*”, 3.

<sup>57</sup>Ray R. Noll, *Sacraments: A New Understanding for a New Generation* (New London, CT: Twenty-Third Publications. 2008), 48.



sent me into the world I have sent them into the world”; “that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us.” In this high priestly prayer Jesus describes how the Trinity-Community shares (mine-yours), yet there is separateness (sent), but still and always complete oneness. The good news is that the Church is invited into this oneness, and to become full participants in the Trinity-Community’s mission (“so that the world may believe.”).<sup>58</sup> Jesus was sent in order to move believers into a new covenantal period – the church period.

Paul states in Ephesians 2:20 that Christ is the “chief cornerstone” – the perfect first stone laid by the Trinity that determines the right alignment of the whole building. In essence, Paul asserts that Christ is the starting place to understand who and what the church is to be and do.<sup>59</sup> Paul explains that we are “being built together,” fitted together as church family.<sup>60</sup> Christ is the foundation, the starting place, and Christians are built into His building. A proper ecclesiology understands that God’s “intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known”.<sup>61</sup> Here, clearly, ecclesiology is the means *through* which the world will know God – mission-worship.

Trinity is the starting place for understanding community and mission. The concept of worship-mission can be seen in the popular discussion related to the missional church, emergent church, and the numerous books on worship in post-modernism. The

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<sup>58</sup>For a full and theologically satisfying discussion of Trinity see Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1985), 321-342.

<sup>59</sup>Arthur Patzia, *New International Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1990), 201.

<sup>60</sup>Ephesians 2:21-22.

<sup>61</sup>Ephesians 3:10.

focus of this discussion will remain in the realm of the development of healthy ecclesiology. To be clear then, if the end goal of Christianity is to worship God and participate in His mission, then the starting place is an orthodox understanding of the Triune God. It is in the pursuit of the heart of God that His plan emerges: Christ's church. Furthermore, as the believer participates in God's design for church, he becomes a worshiper and a missionary (Healthy Doctrine of Trinity → Healthy Ecclesiology → Effective Worship-Mission). Christ called those who were participants in His ekklesia "disciples". Christ's community, through which He accomplished His mission, was a disciple-community.

### **Discipleship**

Discipleship is a critical method of creating healthy church families. Indeed, to be doctrinally sound and missionally alive, a local church will be a "disciple-community," to borrow a term from Stassen and Gushee.<sup>62</sup> Bonhoeffer expresses this essential calling that discipleship "means adherence to Christ, and, because Christ is the object of that adherence, it must take the form of discipleship... Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ."<sup>63</sup> Dallas Willard echoes this sentiment, "For at least several decades the churches of the western world have not made discipleship a condition of being Christian... it is clearly optional."<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Stassen and Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics*, 22.

<sup>63</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, revised edition (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1949), 64.

<sup>64</sup>Dallas Willard, *The Great Sin of Omission: Reclaiming Jesus' Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (San Francisco: Harper, 2006), 4.

What is this great omission that Willard invites the reader to rediscover? One study suggests that half of the Gospel of Mark is given to the time Jesus spent with His disciples.<sup>65</sup> “Discipleship isn’t just *one* of the things the church does; it *is* what the church does!”<sup>66</sup> Discipleship is an intentional and organic process of formation that involves a relationship between a more mature believer and younger believer that will be defined by accountability, commitment, education, encouragement - all in the context of brotherly love.<sup>67</sup> Church family is both the context and essence of this relationship. When each individual Christian lives in a perpetual discipleship within a church family, cultural transformation will be facilitated, and God’s Kingdom expanded. Petersen and Shamy observe that “discipleship is in our vocabulary and our programs today, but discipleship does not characterize our churches.”<sup>68</sup> Campus Crusade for Christ, The Navigators, Intervarsity are examples of para-church organizations that created personal discipleship strategies and tools in order to meet the needs churches were not addressing. One Director of Discipleship in an US seminary explained, “The reason I even have this position is that the church is simply not doing discipleship.” Because the more popular existing models for discipleship have been created outside of church, by para church organizations, they are essentially personally focused rather than the more biblical community-focused. They generally ignore the sacramental and communal dimensions

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<sup>65</sup>Paul M. Zehr and Jim Egli, *Alternative Models of Mennonite Pastoral Formation* ( Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1992), 43.

<sup>66</sup>Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2006), 24.

<sup>67</sup>Organic here means that discipleship should develop naturally, as opposed to more rigid institutionalized agendas, programs, courses or the like.

<sup>68</sup>Jim Petersen and Mike Shamy, *The Insider: Bringing the Kingdom of God into your Everyday World* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 2003), 82.

of genuine discipleship. Healthy community is formed by discipleship; discipleship needs to begin to characterize the North American church. Lois Barrett and her team conducted case studies of nine missional congregations to determine common patterns.<sup>69</sup> Eight patterns surfaced, number two being biblical formation and discipleship.<sup>70</sup> This research confirms that a church family's health is directly correlated to discipleship within the community. The book however does not adequately define discipleship and presumes it to be merely biblical teaching. The researchers refer to Bible studies, exegetical preaching, small groups, and the like as central to each of these nine churches' practice of discipleship. In defining discipleship in this way, the researchers relegate discipleship to being little more than one element of a healthy church rather than the means, lifestyle, or culture of a healthy church family. Two hundred and sixty years ago John Wesley capitalized on the opportunity of discipleship to help a revival become a movement. He orchestrated a culturally relevant and biblically sound *method* of helping new believers grow in Christ called "class meetings". This *methodical* discipleship, class meetings, became a distinctive value of the Methodist movement.<sup>71</sup> Perhaps the new vitality that the FMCIC is pursuing will surface in rediscovering John Wesley's method of contextualizing a culture and determining culturally relevant and doctrinally sound discipleship opportunities. And perhaps, further rediscovery of essential Wesleyan doctrine would contribute to the current manifestation of Methodism in Canada – for instance John and Charles Wesley's emphasis on the sacrament of the Eucharist. Every

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<sup>69</sup>Lois Y. Barrett, ed., *Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns in Missional Faithfulness* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004).

<sup>70</sup>The eight patterns are: missional vocation; biblical formation and discipleship, taking risks as a contrast community, practices that demonstrate God's intent for the world, worship as public witness, dependence on the Holy Spirit, pointing toward the reign of God, and missional authority.

<sup>71</sup>Hence the label "Methodists".

Methodist was encouraged into a class meeting and into the practice of constant communion.

### Sacraments

Are there, under the Christian dispensation, any means ordained of God, as the usual channels of his grace? This question could never have been proposed in the apostolical church, unless by one who openly avowed himself to be a Heathen; the whole body of Christians being agreed, that Christ ordained certain outward means for conveying his grace into the souls of men. Their constant practice set this beyond all dispute; for so long as "all that believed were together, and had all things common," and "they continued steadfastly in the teaching of the Apostles, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers."

--John Wesley, *Sermon Sixteen: The Means of Grace*

John Wesley sees in the primitive church a pathway (or "channel") that God gave to help the fellowship be a fellowship. "Breaking of bread" is intricately connected to Acts 2:47, "praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." The Lord's Supper was as natural and essential a part of the community life as teaching, meeting, miracles, providing for each other, prayers, etc. The Lord's Supper then is a part of God's design for the local church.

Christ instituted certain rites and practices to move a new believer from being outside the community of faith to becoming a full participant in the Body. Because full participation is the goal of discipleship these certain rites and practices should become woven into discipleship. A sacrament<sup>72</sup> is a rite in which God's saving grace is uniquely active.<sup>73</sup> This is not an adequate definition but a good starting place. A more complete

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<sup>72</sup> Merriam-Webster says that "*sacrament* is any of certain Christian rites held to have been instituted by Christ and to convey God's grace to us." <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sacrament> (July 2010).

definition of sacrament includes the rites and processes instituted by Christ that facilitate opportunities to grow in worship and mission. These opportunities were created not to be private religious moments but rather to be lived *in* community, *by* community and to nurture healthy community. Sacraments are not mere symbols<sup>74</sup> of spiritual realities but are also opportunities for supernatural encounters with God and His community.<sup>75</sup> In a post-modern society where experiential encounters trump philosophical or academic assent, the experience of the sacraments can be a potent tool to Christian leadership. Noll suggests that “symbolic activity is human activity par excellence.”<sup>76</sup> And it is one of the fundamental activities for creating community.”<sup>77</sup> Creating community is the essence of the goal of ecclesial formation and, obviously, symbolism plays a key role here, according to Noll.<sup>78</sup> Remember Acts 2 where all who believed were baptized (symbol)<sup>79</sup> and then “breaking of bread” (symbol) became a regular function of the Body of Christ.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>73</sup>Van A. Harvey, *A Handbook of Theological Terms* (New York: Collier Books, 1964), 211.

<sup>74</sup>There is a healthy discussion in the literature as to whether a sacrament is a sign or symbol. This paper chooses to use the word symbol. As George Worgul aptly states: “As noted in our chapter on terms, all symbols are signs. A symbol, however, is more potent than other signs. It is supercharged with a meaning which is not created, but discovered by humankind. Symbols reach down to the depths of reality. They are ontological in character.” George S. Worgul Jr., “Redefining the Term ‘Sacrament’”, *From Magic to Metaphor* (N.Y.: Paulist Press, 1980), 123-128.

<sup>75</sup>There are a variety of definitions for sacrament such as the following: “...symbols arising from the ministry of Christ and continued in and through the Church, which when received in faith, are encounters with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” George S. Worgul (123-128). Each definition wrestles with sacrament as mere symbol versus something more mystical. John Calvin in his *Institutes 4.14.18* explains that Noah’s rainbow and Adam’s tree were sacraments since they were “proofs and seals of his covenant.” According to Vander Zee the Anabaptist tradition understands sacrament as only a “sign” / symbol – this he believes is the most common understanding among evangelicals today (30-31). Still though the more Scripturally satisfying definition is reflected in Worgul’s statement above, where it is symbol *and* encounter with God.

<sup>76</sup>Clearly there is great interest in re-discovering the sacraments: Noll states that there are “nearly 50,000 books and articles” published in the last 30 years alone on sacraments! Noll, *Sacraments*, 160.

<sup>77</sup>Noll, *Sacraments*, 7.

<sup>78</sup>In both Noll and Vander Zee’s books there is intriguing discussion that creation, Israel, Jesus, the cross, etc are all ‘sacrament’. That sacrament is essentially the way God interacts with the world. This will be

The sacrament of communion is the regular and consistent accounting / examination with Christ that Christians are to participate in, in order to: 1. mature individually; 2. celebrate and guard community; 3. re-affirm and celebrate Christ and His sacrifice; 4. and reaffirm their resolve to the *missio dei*.

These sacraments, therefore, are “an attempt on the part of the church to extend into the world the actions of Jesus in his humanity”<sup>81</sup> to perpetuate His life through the church. “Sacramental discipleship” is a transformative practice employed by the Holy Spirit and His church that is an intentional and sustained process designed to “refit”<sup>82</sup> the people of God to be worshipful and missional. If in fact the FMCIC has minimized the importance of the meaning and therefore practice of the sacraments in community living, then perhaps their re-introduction could contribute significantly to increasing the health of the church. For instance, if communion were properly understood and practiced then,

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briefly alluded to in chapter two. Vander Zee, Leonard. *Christ, Baptism and the Lord's Supper: Recovering the Sacraments for Evangelical Worship* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004).

<sup>79</sup>A sixth chapter could be developed in this project that explores the sacrament of baptism and discipleship. The sacrament of baptism is the bridge that Christ gave to individuals to help cross into the family and body of Christ. Baptism is a perpetual “marking” much like a wedding ring that proclaims the believer’s salvation and membership in the body of Christ. Eugene Peterson in *The Message* paraphrases Matthew 28:19 “...marking them with baptism”. To carry the analogy further, putting on the wedding ring or taking off the wedding ring does not make one more or less married. The vows that are exchanged do. The ring is a sign of these vows and becomes more than mere jewelry – more than a sign. Though it is not discussed in this paper, clearly the sacrament of baptism is intricately connected to developing community – in fact it may be the first step of community building! In Acts 2:41 all who believed were baptized. In fact this is the biblical design: conversion, baptism, community. Scripture describes a divine synergy between baptism and communion, where in baptism a believer dies with Christ and rises with Him, and in communion they remember this death and proclaim it again. For a fuller discussion of the position of the FMCIC regarding baptism see <http://fmc-canada.org/en/who-we-are/position-papers/299-baptism-and-dedication>. Also see Chapter Seven, *The Free Methodist Church in Canada: The Manual* (2009-2010).

<sup>80</sup>The popular Protestant movement does not necessarily recognize “sacrament”, but it certainly does practice baptism and communion. This paper will assume the Wesleyan position that these two practices are sacraments.

<sup>81</sup>Noll, *Sacraments*, 30.

<sup>82</sup>“Refit” is Dr. Steve Klipowicz’s language in discussions about this thesis.

at the end of each communion time, no unresolved interpersonal issues would remain in a church family – there would be an immediate resolve to bring the issue to reconciliation.

### **Statement of Thesis Topic**

Jesus created the church. But living in a church community is difficult and counter-cultural.<sup>83</sup> Jesus has always been aware of the difficulties of community building so He does have a plan and provided practices for the church that will not only sustain her but help her thrive in any culture.

John Wesley, the father of Methodism, understood sacraments as a gift Jesus gave the Church to help nurture community. This study explored how a Wesleyan view of the sacrament of communion and a biblical understanding of discipleship can contribute to healthy community formation within the Free Methodist Church in Canada (the joining of communion and discipleship will henceforth be called “sacramental discipleship”). The vision statement of the FMCIC is “to see healthy churches within the reach of all people in Canada and beyond.”<sup>84</sup> The business of the FMCIC is healthy church, or healthy ecclesiology. Sacraments can help in this business; actually practical sacramental theology is a part of the ethos of FMCIC. The father of Methodism, John Wesley practiced and preached about it regularly.<sup>85</sup> His most famous sermon on the topic may be

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<sup>83</sup>Barna seems to celebrate the movement within Christendom that is downplaying connectionalism, denominationalism, and membership. Howard Snyder thinks another of Barna’s books *Pagan Christianity*, has some good critiques of the failures of institutional churches, but thinks that the way forward is through revitalization movements, not the model suggested in Viola and Barna’s work. Barna, *Revolution*. Howard Snyder’s review of ‘Pagan Christianity’ which appeared this spring in the *Revitalization* magazine (Vol. 15 No. 1 Spring 2008) edited by Asbury’s Prof. Stephen O’Malley.

<sup>84</sup> <http://www.fmc-canada.org/index.php/en/Root/vision.html> (November 2009)



“The Duty of Constant Communion” where he developed a solid historical argument for regular participation in the sacrament.<sup>86</sup> Charles, his brother, composed doctrinally rich hymnals to help converts appreciate fully the Eucharist.

The following researchable questions helped direct the study by defining chapters two through four respectively:

1. What is a healthy Christian community and how can discipleship properly support its formation?
2. What is the Wesleyan view of the sacrament of communion and how could it support healthy community formation?
3. How can the experiences and perspectives of current practitioners provide further insight into discipleship, community development, and the sacraments?

## Methodology

Wesley was a practical theologian – a practitioner of his beliefs. He divided theology into two branches, “speculative divinity” and “practical divinity.”<sup>87</sup> Wesley did not despise systematized theology, or “speculative divinity” but his heart was that whatever the discussion, in the end, it would contribute to the furtherance of the Kingdom. This thesis operates under Wesley’s basic assumption and embraces Swinton and Mowat’s

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<sup>85</sup>Matthew McEwen, “The Concept of Sacrifice in the Theology of the Eucharistic Hymns of Charles Wesley” (Toronto: ThM Thesis, Tyndale Seminary, 2007), 7.

<sup>86</sup>Wesley, *Sermon One Hundred One: “The Duty of Constant Communion”*.

<sup>87</sup>Ole Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments: A Definitive Study of John Wesley’s Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Francis Asbury Press, 1972), 36.

well articulated definition of the task of practical theology: Practical Theology is “critical, theological reflection on the practices of the Church as they interact with the practices of the world with a view to ensuring faithful participation in the continuing mission of the triune God.”<sup>88</sup> The methodology of this thesis is to correlate the following:

1. the existing literature with regards sacrament, discipleship and community building (chapter two); 2. A biblical-theological study of the same (chapter three); 3.

Conversations with pastors, church leaders and the National Leadership Team of the FMCIC (chapter four).

The format of chapter four invited theological reflection which facilitates a few goals: through these conversations with pastors and denominational leaders in a variety of settings, common practice in the FMCIC movement is discerned; next, through these conversations, healthy practice is shared; and finally, perhaps the FMCIC can be positively infected through these pastors and leaders with a healthier understanding of discipleship, sacrament, and community.

Ten Christian leaders met on three separate occasions. Eight out of the ten were FMCIC pastors from rural, urban, healthy, not healthy (according to the NCD Survey), traditional or contemporary styles. All the leaders were Wesleyan. They dialogued about the present state of sacrament in the FMCIC and about possible steps the movement can take to recapture Wesley’s call to be a sacramental people. Group One, which met twice for two hours each time, discussed the following: sacrament today, the definition and state of discipleship, the vitality of community in FMCIC churches, and possible practical steps the local congregations can take (i.e., a FMCIC catechism, training for sacramental

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<sup>88</sup>John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press, 2006), 25.

discipleship relationships, etc.). Group Two met once for two hours to focus specifically on the potential of connecting discipleship to the Eucharist. As well, interviews with each of the National Leadership Team (NLT) were conducted, concerning the present state of communion, discipleship and health of FMCIC. Appendix A outlines the probing questions the reflection groups processed.

### **Summary of Chapters**

The guiding question in chapter two is twofold: “What is healthy Christian community and how can discipleship properly support its formation?” First, both community and discipleship were defined. Then the story and nature of the church was developed by studying Pauline descriptive imagery of church (i.e. Body, family, building, etc.) and Jesus’ teaching about the church. A cursory survey of secular and sacred literature with regards community was helpful. Finally, when the imagery of Paul and Jesus and their explicit teachings about the church, *and* the researched literature was amalgamated, the fuller theological implications about the church is asserted. Furthermore, the question of how the FMCIC fits into the larger body of Christ was then discussed.

Next, discipleship was defined with Scripture and with some insight from theological writings. The pathway described in Figure 1.3 below is developed in chapter two, and offers insight in how discipleship can support the formation of a healthy congregation.

Chapter three explores a second guiding question: “What is the Wesleyan view of the sacrament of communion and how could it support healthy community formation?”

Popular Protestant theology, which does not necessarily understand communion and baptism as sacraments and the Roman Catholic views are briefly stated. The Roman Catholics<sup>89</sup> have written much about the sacraments, and the evangelical movement has written relatively little. On the other hand, the evangelical movement has produced much about discipleship as if discipleship and sacrament are exclusive from one another. Of most interest is a brief history of the story of communion (from Acts to Wesley) and its function historically. Particular attention was paid to a Wesleyan perspective of sacraments and discipleship.<sup>90</sup> John Wesley understood the sacraments “as the ordinary channels of conveying His grace to the souls of men.”<sup>91</sup> He connected discipleship, which occurred through class meetings, with the sacraments, which he called the ordinary channels. Ole Borgen’s *John Wesley on the Sacraments*, Rob Staples’ *Outward Sign and Inward Grace*, and Matthew McEwen’s *The Concept of Sacrifice in the Theology of the Eucharistic Hymns of Charles Wesley* are primary sources while Geoffrey Wainwright’s *Eucharist and Eschatology*, J. Ernest Rattenbury’s *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley*, and Robert Webber *The Sacred Actions of Christian Worship, Volume VI* are secondary sources for this discussion.

Chapter four is a discussion of the final research question: “How can the experiences and perspectives of current practitioners provide further insight into discipleship,

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<sup>89</sup>Noll, *Sacraments* is a good summary of current Catholic literature and is a primary source for this discussion.

<sup>90</sup>Though the focus of the project is Wesleyan, reference is also made to Leonard Vander Zee. Vander Zee understands his approach as being “thoroughly biblical, Reformed and evangelical” (11). He argues that the sacraments should be a uniting principle yet it is quite divisive. Perhaps inquiries like this paper and others will help the Church rediscover the heart of the teaching and principles we can all embrace to become the bride “without spot or blemish.” Leonard Vander Zee, *Christ, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper: Recovering the Sacraments for Evangelical Worship* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press), 2004.

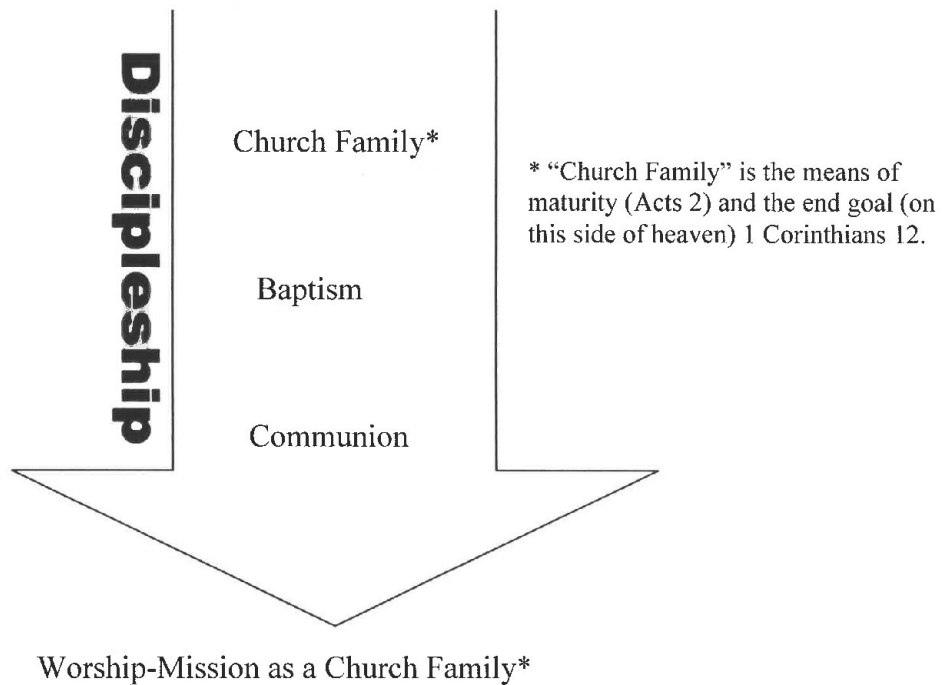
<sup>91</sup>Wesley, *Sermon Sixteen: The Means of Grace*, II.3.

community development, and the sacraments?” As indicated, chapter four includes six hours of conversations with Free Methodist ministers, leaders and one Nazarene pastor; and four interviews with the FMCIC National Leadership Team. The dialogue and interviews were focused on sacrament, community, discipleship and possible steps the FMCIC can take towards becoming a healthy church community. The FMCIC does not presently operate with a standard unifying principle for sacraments and their administration in the context of church health. As a denomination it has not fully unpacked the potential of sacramental discipleship. Currently, for example, communion is added to the end of a service once a month. The purpose of the focus groups was to help evaluate the use of communion and perhaps create a practical sacramental discipleship tool for the FMCIC.

Finally chapter five summarizes findings, and briefly discusses the power of a collaborative research project (i.e. what and how the network of pastors learned). The FMCIC benefits with a richer theology of the potential of the sacraments in developing health, thus becoming missional. But the FMCIC also will learn from the council of the wise – a network of churches wrestling theologically and introducing reform. The conversations were correlated to the Scriptural and theological findings in chapters two and three of this document. Chapter five also contains an idea and a model. It is not a program, or class, but an idea about integrating Holy Communion (and its’ themes) with discipleship. The idea lead to a model to help the Church learn to naturally and intentionally disciple. See Figure 1.3 on the next page.

**Figure 1.3 Sacramental Discipleship**

**“Sacramental Discipleship” as a Pathway for Ecclesial Reformation:**



## CHAPTER TWO:

### HEALTHY CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AND DISCIPLESHIP

No one can become a new man except by entering the church and becoming a member of the Body of Christ. It is impossible to become a new man as a solitary individual.

--Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The ultimate goal of a Christian is to worship God and to participate in His mission. The context of worship and mission is community. In order for the Christian mandate to be fulfilled, the community of faith needs to be on a journey towards health. Discipleship is a necessary ingredient in church health. In this chapter, both healthy church and discipleship are explored.

Some current missional thinking within Christendom, is calling the church to *emerge* into a new, purer, and more relevant church.<sup>1</sup> Because the church is a complex organism, reform must come at several fronts (i.e., church context, worship, mission, community life, and so forth). The facet explored in this work is a church's health relative to its mission. Therefore, this chapter's guiding question is: What is a healthy Christian community and how can discipleship properly support its formation? A review of secular and sacred writings contributed to the understanding of community, but a biblical survey of Pauline and the Gospel writings helped solidify a working definition of a healthy church community.<sup>2</sup> Particular attention was paid to Jesus' specific words

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<sup>1</sup>Examples of such writings include: Hirsch's *The Forgotten Ways*; Van Gelder's *The Ministry of the Missional Church*; Driscoll *The Radical Reformation*; Richardson *Evangelism Outside the Box*; and Rainer and Geiger *Simple Church*.

<sup>2</sup>This biblical survey could also include an examination of community in the Old Testament: that the story of Israel is a prototype of the new community Jesus established as His church. Certainly the book of Acts offers wonderful insight into the first 25 years of the developing church and would contribute to this discussion. However, a sufficient picture of the function of church is presented in the Gospels and in Paul's writings to establish a biblically satisfying foundation to understanding a healthy community.

regarding church in Matthew 16:18. This was followed by a literary review and a biblical examination of the purpose and proper functioning of biblical discipleship. The synthesis of the definitions of church and discipleship provided the answer to the guiding question above.

### **Christian Community: the Ideal**

The recovery is never a matter of going backward for the sake of re-establishing an older pattern, but rather uncovering what has been hidden or overlaid and therefore forgotten. The purpose of such uncovering is the potential effect upon the present and future. We go back to the New Testament therefore, not as antiquarians and not as mere historians, but in the hope of finding hints of vitality of which our time is relatively unaware.

--Elton Trueblood

Elton Trueblood suggests that in order to move forward, the church must “go back to the New Testament.” Perhaps in a re-examination of the origin of the church, the Free Methodist Church in Canada will re-discover that which time has eroded – her vitality. Alan Hirsch challenges Christianity to be brave enough to critically reflect upon its “radical” roots, and not simply live in the default Christian lifestyle that is about the “familiar and controllable.”<sup>3</sup> This is not a call for the church to relive the glory days and simply mimic dress, eating habits, and language of the early church; rather it is a call [that the leadership of the FMCIC should choose to participate in] to explore the original intent and operation of the early church specifically to apply these principles to today’s context. This exploration of the original design for church begins with Jesus’ words in Matthew 16:18, “And I tell you that you are Peter and on this rock I will build my *church*

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<sup>3</sup> Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2006), 17.



[italics mine] and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>4</sup> Three foundational truths from this passage contribute to an understanding of a healthy Christian community: the church belongs to Christ; Jesus gives the church his authority; and the church is God’s solution to life.

First, Christ is building His church (*oikodomesō mou ten ekklesian* – “I will build my church”). Apparently, some debate exists as to whether this passage was part of the original text because “it betrays an ecclesiastical interest that would be impossible during Jesus’ ministry.”<sup>5</sup> The debate is interesting in that it assumes that Christ’s mandate and the context from which He was fulfilling the Messiah-ship was not ecclesial in nature. Indeed it was and, as France rightly points out, the term *church* would not have the baggage at the time of Jesus that it would for later Christians. At Christ’s time *ekklesia* was the word chosen to translate the Hebrew *qahal*, which means “congregation or community of God.”<sup>6</sup> The Messiah was creating a Messianic-community. Matthew, by using the word *ekklesia* twice, was naturally developing a theology that this new *ekklesia* was replacing (or fulfilling) the old *ekklesia* of God.<sup>7</sup> The Old Testament is a story of how Abraham’s family while in captivity and then in their journey in the wilderness, became a nation. It is a story of a family, people, community, nation all rolled into one *ekklesia*. By using this term Jesus was making it clear that the new story would also be about family, people, community, and nation. The church’s great commission from

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<sup>4</sup>Matthew 16:18-19a (NIV).

<sup>5</sup>R.T. France, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: Matthew* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), 255.

<sup>6</sup>France, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: Matthew*, 255.

<sup>7</sup>R.T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989), 211.

Matthew 28 is therefore enveloped in the “ecclesiastical gospel,”<sup>8</sup> and should not be understood outside of it. Christ was designing and defining His movement.<sup>9</sup>

*Ekklesia*, the word Jesus chooses to use for church, is an interesting one. There were a “considerable number of words available in the contemporary vocabulary of that Hellenistic world to describe gatherings of religious groups such as *heranos* or *thiasos*” but in the first five centuries of the faith *ekklesia* was the word of choice.<sup>10</sup> It would have been natural to use the word *synagogue* to describe Christ followers who had sprung up out of Jewish people, but this word could not convey the uniqueness of this new community.<sup>11</sup> *Ekklesia* is used only twice in the Gospels (Matthew 16:18 and 18:17), but 23 times in Acts. Luke, the author of Acts, understood that *ekklesia* was the word to

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<sup>8</sup>France, *Matthew*, 242.

<sup>9</sup>Christ initiated this unique community, He is building it and it will continue to be His. The Apostle Paul states that Christ is the “head of the church” (Ephesians 1:10). The word for head in the Greek is *kephale* which is “the head, top, that which is uppermost in relation to something.” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1992), 860. Paul’s description of church is that Jesus is the initiator of His work and sustainer of the work: the head. Jesus was not creating an institution where He would be a silent partner. He is a full participant, the owner and operator. Paul then outlines Christ’s continued work in the church: He loves her; died for her; makes her holy; presents her as a radiant bride; feeds; cares; and several more times in order to make it quite clear, Paul writes that Jesus *agapao* (loves) the church (Ephesians 5:25-33). *Agapao* refers to the unconditional love of God and to the subsequent lifestyle a believer lives who has experienced the love of God (Colin Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 2, 538-550). In Craig Van Gelder’s view, there exist at least five dimensions of God’s full participation in the church. The first is that “the Spirit creates a new type of reconciled community through accomplishing redemption and gives this community a new identity as the church of Jesus Christ.” The other four are: Spirit gives and empowers leadership to guide these communities; The Spirit leads these communities into sanctified living consistent with their new nature in Christ; He leads these communities into active service; and He leads these communities into the world to unmask principalities and powers through a ministry of suffering service. These five together offer good insight into opportunity of a healthy church family. Van Gelder reminds the reader that Christ is the creator of church, has redeemed her, and gives the church her new identity. Again, Christ is the owner and operator. Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church: A Community Led by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2007), 41-46.

<sup>10</sup>Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 132.

<sup>11</sup>Synagogue referred to either the meeting place of the local Jewish community or the congregation itself. Colin Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 296.

describe church after Jesus' earthly activities.<sup>12</sup> Paul would further develop the concept using the term 46 times out of the 114 times it is used in the New Testament.<sup>13</sup> *Ekklesia* is a secular word for "the assembly of all the citizens, to which every citizen is summoned and expected to attend."<sup>14</sup> Newbigin argues that Paul in using this word was making the point that the summons would be understood as coming from God and that every follower of Christ as a citizen was expected to attend. Attendance was not optional, because God was summoning His people together. Christians were to be together physically and metaphorically. Paul consistently referred to the *ekklesia tou Theou* ("the assembly of God") which identifies God as the one summoning believers without exception. *Ekklesia* refers both to a local congregation of believers ("To the *ekklesia tou Theou* in Corinth," 1 Corinthians 1:2) and to the body of believers across space and time, the universal church ("Christ is head of the *ekklesia*," Ephesians 5:23). It is important to note that in the New Testament the visible commitment to the universal church of Jesus Christ was made by participating in a local community of faith.

First consideration then about Matthew 16:18 is that the church is Christ's initiative, it belongs to Him and He continues to build it. Secondly, Jesus, in Matthew 16:19, gives His followers the keys to the Kingdom. The Greek word for keys is *kleis*. In ancient times, a wealthy family gave its steward a key in recognition of his office – a sign

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<sup>12</sup>Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 297.

<sup>13</sup>Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 298.

<sup>14</sup>Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 132. Brown explains further that "centuries before the translation of the OT and the time of NT" *ekklesia* was firmly understood as a "the assembly of full citizens functionally rooted in the constitution of the democracy, an assembly in fundamental political and judicial decisions were taken." Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 291.

of trust, responsibility and the power entrusted in him by the master of the home.<sup>15</sup> The keys then are not about admission into the Kingdom but they signify the responsibility of the administration of the Kingdom work. Jesus holds the admission keys as is stated in Revelation 1:18, but we are entrusted with a new authority. Isaiah 22:22 describes the “key to the house of David” – a sign of authority, wherein Eliakim, the chief steward of the House of David, is given the key to act on God’s behalf to lead His people. Interestingly the key imagery is found only here in the Old Testament. Eliakim, the key holder, is described in function as a father (i.e., to care for). His authority includes legislating and making binding decisions; as a peg he is to hold the kingdom firm.<sup>16</sup> Clearly Jesus was very aware of the Isaiah imagery when He gave the church the keys: leadership, paternal care, legislative power, and holding the Kingdom firm.

Each time *ekklesia* is used in Matthew the context is the administration of this new authority (i.e., binding, loosing and dealing with a brother who sins). Binding and loosing were “technical terms for the pronouncements of Rabbis on what was and was not permitted (to bind was to forbid and to loose to permit).”<sup>17</sup> In both Matthew 16 and 18, the new *ekklesia* was being entrusted with a new legislative authority with regards the operation of the church. These are managerial keys given to the church by the Owner. Jesus, though not turning over ownership or headship, was inviting His followers to become full participants in His new creation, *ekklesia*. Newbigin offers a thoughtful definition of church as the “provisional incorporation of humankind into Jesus Christ.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, 865.

<sup>16</sup>J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 188.

<sup>17</sup>France, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: Matthew*, 256.

Arguably *into* is the most important word in this definition as it rightly lays out the form of church: Christians conforming *into* what Christ is already doing and being. Van Gelder reiterates Newbigin's idea in his description of the missional church as understanding itself as existing "as a community created by the Spirit that is missionary by nature in being called and sent to participate in God's mission in the world."<sup>19</sup> A healthy community will receive this entrustment by Christ (the keys) and operate within Christ's mission. The community understands that it has been entrusted with authority,<sup>20</sup> empowered with gifts,<sup>21</sup> and filled with the Holy Spirit in order to carry out her mandate.<sup>22</sup>

To review: First the church is Christ's initiative; it belongs to Him and He continues to build it. Secondly, Christ gave to the church the keys for the Kingdom, which is the authority to participate in the mission of God by giving His church leadership, paternal care, legislative power, and holding the *ekklesia* united. The third foundational truth in understanding Christ's new creation, the church, is found in Matthew 16:18: "and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." "Overcome" (Greek *katischuso*) is "to be strong against, or prevail against or vanquish."<sup>23</sup> In Christ's thinking, the church community stands alone as the force capable of contending with all of life's presenting issues. Implicit in the reference to Hades is that if Hades cannot

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<sup>18</sup>Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 133.

<sup>19</sup>Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church*, 73. [italics mine].

<sup>20</sup>Matthew 28:18.

<sup>21</sup>1 Corinthians 12.

<sup>22</sup>Acts 1:8.

<sup>23</sup>Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, 851.

overcome the church, then certainly nothing on earth can. Nothing physical and certainly nothing spiritual is like the church. Christ is establishing (summoning) a community that is given authority and power to participate in the mission of God. Paul explains in his letter to Ephesus that God's "intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord."<sup>24</sup> Again note that the early believers were understanding *ekklesia* as a channel through which (and by which) the mysteries of God would be demonstrated to the world; thus the church should understand herself as the cultural agent of transformation. A healthy Christian community understands the vital transformative agent it is called to be.

Paul uses various words and metaphors to help the church understand herself. *Body, army, family, building* and *bride*<sup>25</sup> are important terms to note. Each speaks of a dynamic relationship involving unity of individual parts, interconnectedness, and interdependence. Each metaphor describes the *ekklesia* as being vital. With the metaphor of church as a building for instance, the building materials described in Ephesians 2:19-22 are apostles, prophets, Christians, and with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone – this building is alive! Consider briefly each descriptor above. It is neither healthy nor permissible to be apart from the whole. A body part not connected to the body is considered severed and will be dead if not immediately restored;<sup>26</sup> a soldier away from his unit is not only endangered, but is considered AWOL; a family member who steps in

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<sup>24</sup>Ephesians 3:10-11.

<sup>25</sup>"Body" 1 Corinthians 12; "bride" Ephesians 5; "army" Ephesians 6; "family" Romans 4:16 for instance; and "building" Ephesians 2:19-22.

<sup>26</sup>A good discussion about Paul's understanding of *soma* and its connection to the *ekklesia* is in Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 300.

and out of her family is a symptom perhaps of a dysfunctional family, or in the least, it is a family that is hurting; a building with missing bricks will not pass an inspection and will not weather a storm; and finally, a bride is only a bride if there is a groom. Paul uses these images of church to help believers clarify relationship expectations. If Christ had established an institution, then Paul could have simply reminded believers of the systems and policies of this institution. But, Christ established an organic community – a network of relationships which would experience conflict, and harmony, celebration and sorrow, defeat and victory. Paul, as a loving parent<sup>27</sup> felt obliged to guide the church as he would a family.<sup>28</sup>

The following foundational truths have been discussed: the centrality of Christ; His creation of this dynamic force called the *ekklesia tou Theou*; the means by which believers share space and experience God. It is from within this transformative context (church) that the mission of God is understood and exercised in the world. In the end God's plan for the church is impressive. In practice however, is the church in the West impressive?

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<sup>27</sup>1 Thessalonians 2:11

<sup>28</sup>The Methodist Twenty-Five Articles of Religion, Article XIII, "Of the Church" states: "The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are required to the same". Note that church is not defined as program, ministry or organization but rather as a means of grace (Word of God and sacraments). Rob Staples, *Outward Sign and Inward Grace: The Place of Sacraments in Wesleyan Spirituality* (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1991), 100.

## Christian Community: The Reality

George Barna makes the following statement: "... we are not called to *go* to church. We are called to *be* the Church."<sup>29</sup> Barna's research has pointed to a decline in church attendance and in membership. He is suggesting that, rather than be in a Sunday morning service, these same committed followers of Christ are being the church in their homes and in their own independent ways. Barna's ecclesiology is biblically incorrect as it offers permission to Christians to understand their faith independent of a Body. Being the church cannot mean that each individual Christian serves and worships without either the accountability, or the extensive resources that the corporate Body has been created to enjoy. It is a poor theology to try to separate in practice, the universal church from the local church. Barna uses the terms "Church" and "church" to make this point, but it is not a biblical point.<sup>30</sup> Rather it is a concession. Church attendance in North America statistically is in decline; the solution should not be to offer permission to fragment it further with a theology of independence and non-connectionalism.<sup>31</sup> Reggie McNeal makes a similar statement to Barna in his own explanation for the decline in church attendance: "They are not leaving [church] because they have lost faith. They are leaving the church to preserve their faith."<sup>32</sup> He says further that there are 112 million churchless

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<sup>29</sup>George Barna, *Revolution* (US: Tyndale House Publishing, 2005), 39.

<sup>30</sup>This discussion is not meant to be polemical. Rather the reason to highlight Barna's research and conclusions is to lay out both the already well recognized truth that the church in America is contending with serious health issues, while also representing one possible and popular solution to this issue: Barna's solution is the revolution described above.

<sup>31</sup>Barna lays out some of the alarming findings for the church in America, including their view of church services, worldview, Bible literacy, and serving with spiritual gifts. In the end Barna laments that his research has created great frustration in trying to resolve the "disconnection between what our research consistently shows about church Christians and what the Bible calls us to be." Barna, *Revolution*, 31-35.

<sup>32</sup>Reggie McNeal, *The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 4.



Christians in the U.S.A.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps the solution is not as simple as revolution away from the institutional church, as Barna suggests. Perhaps the solution is in the rediscovery of the original purposes of church and the original culture of the Kingdom.<sup>34</sup>

What is the Kingdom of God? In the Gospels, the Kingdom of God is the descriptor for the rule of God for eternity. It represents the culture of God; that is, the norms, patterns, beliefs, and ethics that God wants to introduce into the world. God would like to contextualize His Kingdom into present prevailing cultures.<sup>35</sup> This is both the journey of a healthy community and its tension: what is the prevailing culture versus what is the Kingdom culture? How can a church be contextually healthy but not be syncretistic? To be missional as a church is to be acting less according to the prevailing culture and more according to the Kingdom, yet influencing the prevailing culture with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Van Gelder suggests that our present reality is that church is “established” or “corporate” but needs to be “missional.”<sup>36</sup> The established church exists “as the primary geographical location of God’s presence on earth through which the world can encounter God, with this authority being legitimated by the civil government.”<sup>37</sup> The corporate church “exists as an organization with a purposive intent to accomplish something on

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<sup>33</sup>McNeal, *The Present Future*, 5.

<sup>34</sup>So much more could be explored about the state of the church, but for further reading: Ronald Sider, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005); Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*. Another interesting study would be the correlation of the state of the church and morality in Canada (i.e., Canada is presently contending with legislation about euthanasia, same sex marriage, polygamy, age of consent, legalizing the sex trade, to name a few)

<sup>35</sup>The Kingdom contextualized is manifest in the story of the Incarnation. For a more thorough and thoughtful treatment of the Kingdom read Glen Stassen and David Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 2003).

<sup>36</sup>Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church*, 73.

<sup>37</sup>Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church*, 73.

behalf of God in the world, with this role being legitimated on a voluntary basis.”<sup>38</sup>

Certainly neither the established and corporate churches nor the dramatic decline in church attendance reflects God’s ideal of the *ekklesia*. The next question is: Can this reality be transformed into a vital community of faith?

### **How Can the Christian Community Be Transformed?**

People change when something so disturbs them that they are forced to let go of their present beliefs. Nothing changes until we interpret things differently.

--Margaret Wheatley, *Finding Our Way*

Yes the Christian community can be transformed; however, because the church is a complex organism, reform necessarily must come at several fronts (i.e., worship, mission, community life, etc.). It would not be enough to simply fix worship, or rethink mission, or resolve to live in community better. Too often this is the approach: fix this particular component of church life and all will be well; or think this way about mission and your church too can move forward. Clearly, it is true that the church does indeed need fixing, rethinking and biblical resolves. Romans 12:1 says, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” How is the church to stop succumbing to world patterns (its values, beliefs, norms)? How is the corporate mind of the church renewed? William Beckham alliterates as he describes the sequence of events necessary for spiritual revolution: “Reformation of doctrine + Revival of God’s Spirit + Remnant of God’s committed + *Restoration of the New Testament Design* [italics mine] = Spiritual Revolution.”<sup>39</sup> According to Beckham,

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<sup>38</sup>Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church*, 73.

revolution within the Christian community will occur as her present culture is examined and brought into alignment with the Kingdom values.<sup>40</sup>

Imagine an iceberg. The ice above the waterline is all the iceberg the viewer sees. But two thirds of the iceberg is below the waterline, and it is this two thirds that makes the iceberg float. If a section of the visible iceberg is removed, the section below the water would rise to the surface.<sup>41</sup> Likewise a community is supported and defined by its culture(s). Culture is an “integrated system of beliefs, values, and customs and includes the institutions which express those beliefs, values and customs that bind a society (or community) together and give it a sense of identity, dignity and continuity.”<sup>42</sup> Culture is the two-thirds of the iceberg below the waterline. The behaviors and institutions (or community) that express the culture’s particular meanings are the one-third above the waterline.

Community<sup>43</sup> can be understood on three planes: place or locality; interest; and communion.<sup>44</sup> Place is a group or collective formed as a result of a shared geography or

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<sup>39</sup>William Beckham, *The Second Reformation: Reshaping the Church for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Houston, TX: Touch Publications, 1995), 232.

<sup>40</sup>H.Richard Niebuhr offers a fascinating exploration about Christ and His relationship to culture: Christ against culture, Christ of (in) culture, Christ above culture, Christ and culture in paradox, and Christ the Transformer of culture. For further consideration see Richard H.Niebuhr, *Christ And Culture* ( New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2001).

<sup>41</sup>From a discussion in “Culture and the Missional Church” – a foundational course for the FMCIC taught by Dan Sheffield and Jared Sebert (January 2009).

<sup>42</sup>Dan Sheffield, *The Multicultural Leader: Developing a Catholic Personality* (Toronto: Clements Publishing, 2005), 10.

<sup>43</sup>The dictionary definition of community is “**noun** (pl. **communities**) **1** a group of people living together in one place. **2 (the community)** the people of an area or country considered collectively; society. **3** a group of people with a common religion, race, or profession: *the scientific community*. **4** the holding of certain attitudes and interests in common. **5** a group of interdependent plants or animals growing or living together or occupying a specified habitat. ([http://www.askoxford.com/concise\\_oed/community?view=uk](http://www.askoxford.com/concise_oed/community?view=uk)) November 2009.

locality. Shared interests (i.e., sports, religion, academic communities) can group people together categorically. Communion entails a profound meeting or encounter – not just with other people, but also with God and creation. One example is the Christian communion of saints.”<sup>45</sup> Sheffield defines culture as “shared beliefs, values, and customs.”<sup>46</sup> Newbigin makes the distinction between culture and community this way: Culture is the “whole way in which a community lives together.”<sup>47</sup> It would seem then that culture can be understood as the basic building block for community.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, in order to change a community one must contend with its beliefs, assumptions, norms, myths, and meanings.<sup>49</sup> Edgar Schein calls this list “basic assumptions.”<sup>50</sup>

Walter Wink believes that the church has spent “too much time” drawing on secular models of social change “without drawing as well on our [Christian] rich fund of symbolism and imagery, liturgy and story.”<sup>51</sup> In Schein’s language, these (symbolism, imagery, etc) are Christianity’s basic assumptions. Wink reminds the church that beyond

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<sup>44</sup>Though several books offered definitions of community this website laid out these three ideas quite clearly and the article is worthy of thoughtful interaction: <http://www.infed.org/index.htm>. November 2009.

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.infed.org/index.htm>.

<sup>46</sup>Sheffield, *The Multicultural Leader*, 10.

<sup>47</sup>Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 146.

<sup>48</sup>From class notes taken in Dr.Laniak’s course (Gordon-Conwell Seminary, Charlotte 2008).

<sup>49</sup>“Culture changes only after you have successfully altered people’s action, after the behavior produces some group benefit for a period of time and after people see the connection between actions and the performance improvements. Thus most cultural change happens in stage 8 and not stage 1...” Though true on many levels, what is missing in this explanation is the power of deeply embedded and held basic assumptions. John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1996), 156.

<sup>50</sup>Edgar H Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992), 22.

<sup>51</sup>Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 117.

the visible structures and cultural languages and symbols there is an invisible “spirit” over which Satan presides.<sup>52</sup> Wink describes the human experience this way,

Like fish in water, we are not even aware that it exists, much less that it determines the way we think, speak, and act...So invisible are its assaults [the power of the air], in fact, that only a special coat of invisible arms can protect even those who have been made aware of and delivered from it. I refer, of course, to the ‘panoply of God’s armor’ spoken of in Eph.6:10-20.<sup>53</sup>

Wink clearly accepts some secular social change theory but argues that beyond the visible there is an invisible reality, “rulers, authorities, powers, spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms”.<sup>54</sup> These powers are not necessarily an army of demons (for that matter, they are not intrinsically good or evil) but a social system that demons have influence in and a system certainly corrupted by human sin. Therefore, according to Wink it is not sufficient to try to change the world with a theory that does not take into account the ominous powers underlying society. In Wink’s opinion both awareness of the power structure (i.e. “naming the powers”) and prayer are essential to begin cultural transformation.<sup>55</sup>

The problem is that culture is not easily manipulated because basic assumptions are never confronted or debated, or prayed about.<sup>56</sup> Any challenge to our basic assumptions will create “anxiety and defensiveness”<sup>57</sup> which is a culture’s means of self-

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<sup>52</sup>Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 83.

<sup>53</sup>Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 84.

<sup>54</sup> Ephesians 3:12.

<sup>55</sup>Walter Wink’s work is important for further consideration of cultural transformation (there are two other volumes in this series). He offers scholarly definitions of the usage of the power words in Scripture: rulers, thrones, authorities, principalities, etc. Once defined the Christian community can begin to engage in prayer (spiritual warfare) where the demonic are reminded that all power belongs to God; but also the church is in a position to wed social action and evangelism in order to fulfill the great commission.

<sup>56</sup>Wink, *Naming the Power*, 84.

preservation. So if indeed Christianity in Canada is syncretistic, then every sermon, Bible reading and spiritual experience will be filtered through local cultural assumptions. If the new information is incongruent with the basic assumptions, the defense mechanism “distorts, denies, projects or in other ways falsifies”<sup>58</sup> in order to decrease anxiety and maintain status quo. The dynamic can distort church truth and practice.<sup>59</sup>

Wink and Schein’s theories can help the church have some understanding of itself in relation to Jesus’ teachings. For instance, how does the FMCIC reconcile all Christ’s teachings about sacrifice with the dominant cultural tendency towards consumerism and materialism? Perhaps it is as Schein suggests, the church culture’s defense mechanism is engaged and these passages are corrupted and distorted into something much less than Christ’s original meaning. Basic assumptions can be so strongly held that “members will find behaviour based on any other premise inconceivable.”<sup>60</sup> Too often a contentious issue, like a discussion about women in ministry, is not an exercise in humble exegetical debate but is a reaction based on unexamined, strongly held basic assumptions.<sup>61</sup> So how then do we expose basic assumptions?

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<sup>57</sup>Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 23.

<sup>58</sup>Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 22.

<sup>59</sup>Schein offers an interesting insight into the levels of culture: there are “basic assumptions” described above; “espoused values” and then “artifacts.” If Canadian culture holds as a basic assumption that there is no god then one of the espoused values may be understood as a firm conviction of evolution. And if the espoused value is evolution then the corresponding artifact may be a redefining of morality as having no absolute basis; therefore, legislation about doctor assisted suicide is not a moral discussion based on right or wrong, but based on the popular vote. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 17.

<sup>60</sup>Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 22.

<sup>61</sup>Wink explains that sometimes our core beliefs, and institutions can have a “suprahuman quality”. He says “although created and staffed by humans, decisions are not made so much by people as for them, out of the logic of institutional life itself. And because the institution usually antedates and outlasts its employees, it develops and imposes a set of traditions, expectations, beliefs and values on everyone in its employ.” Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 110.

## Cultural Transformation

Edgar Schein offers three precursors for a culture to experience change:

- a) Enough “disconfirming data” to cause serious discomfort;
- b) The connection of the disconfirming data to important goals and ideals causing anxiety / guilt;
- c) Enough psychological safety (i.e., helping an individual save face, or feel job security).<sup>62</sup>

It would seem that Schein’s observations reflect the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>63</sup> The Holy Spirit’s work includes teaching and reminding believers of Jesus’ truth<sup>64</sup> – this corresponds to precursor *a* above. People are uncomfortable with the Gospel because it is a different set of cultural norms than to which Canadians presently adhere. Next, in order to be purposeful and to experience wholeness, obviously Christians need to live life *in* Christ. Precursor *b* identified the connection between the new data and goals. Clearly, believers must be enabled by the Holy Spirit if they are to pursue the goals of wholeness and purpose. Finally, precursor *c* alludes to a safety which is the experience of shalom that Christ brings into believers’ lives as He begins His work of sanctification. What is important to note here is that the work of the Holy Spirit is relational. His work is not policy, systems, programs, or simply declarations of truth. The Holy Spirit lives in people in order to introduce and enact desired changes (John 14 and 15). He introduces basic assumption change by working in people. Margaret Wheatley explains that society is dealing with an ‘old story’ about who and how people should function as a community.<sup>65</sup> The old story is that society is like a machine wherein people are controlled, and

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<sup>62</sup>Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 298-299.

<sup>63</sup>Nowhere in his work cited in this paper does Schein claim to be a believer.

<sup>64</sup>John 14:15-16.

<sup>65</sup>Wheatley, *Finding Our Way*, 17.

developed to perform. People desire efficiency and predictability in order to function as a community.<sup>66</sup> But, Wheatley explains that a new story is emerging where, when people set aside their “machine glasses, [they] can observe a world that exhibits life’s ebullient creativity and life’s great need for other life.”<sup>67</sup> The new story is about relationship, interdependence, *community*. The new story that Wheatley writes about is, in fact, a very old one – it is the story of the *ekklesia tou Theou*. Therefore, within the context of church, basic assumptions can be confronted and new ones embedded.<sup>68</sup> Donald Goertz describes the transformative potential of community as he writes, “Together, with this common life, we begin to see again the Kingdom values lived out. The community helps us understand the inner logic of a set of values which seems to be so counter-intuitive outside of the community. It is in this context that we are able to be restored, renewed, and refocused”.<sup>69</sup> However, neither the pulpit nor Sunday school is the most effective method of contending with basic assumptions, or worldly patterns. The primary method must be relationship; after all, that is Christ’s method.

Briefly, consider some of the principles, behaviors, symbols, and language that God employs to transform individuals (who are outside of His Kingdom) to being full citizens of His new culture. God chose a man, Abraham, made him a family, and then made the family into the nation Israel. Then the nation strove to maintain her identity

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<sup>66</sup>Wheatley, *Finding Our Way*, 18-19.

<sup>67</sup>Wheatley, *Finding Our Way*, 21.

<sup>68</sup>Wink explains that since the church does not have “unmediated access to the ‘within’ of a system, or institution, or even another person, for their ‘withins’ are a function not of our acts alone but of all the history and traditions, beliefs and experiences that make up their reality at any given moment. That is where faith and prayer come in. We intercede before the Sovereign of the Powers to rectify this institution’s or person’s balance, to align its spirituality with the good of the whole, to convert it and transform it.” Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 127.

<sup>69</sup> Donald Goertz, “Toward A Missional Theology of Worship,” *Theology of Mission*, class notes (Toronto: Tyndale University and Seminary, 2009), 4.



surrounded as she was by other nations. What principles and behaviors did God require of Israel to help protect His design for “His people?”

God offered Israel encounters with Himself. Visions, visitations, signs, and miracles became communal experiences (for example Israel walked through the Red Sea). Then, in order to protect the memory of these communal experiences, He gave Israel symbols, festivals, and inspired liturgies: symbols like circumcision and piles of rocks (altars) that would remind the nation of God-encounters and promises; festivals that engaged all the senses and were part of the rhythm of their annual calendars; and liturgies, prayers and psalms that were born out of victories, blessings or memorable events. These symbols, life rhythms, and language helped concretize Israel’s basic assumptions. God was forming a community by establishing basic assumptions, symbols, language, and lifestyle patterns. Likewise, in the New Testament, Jesus introduced a new ethic. In order to infuse a new culture, Jesus disciplined. His Kingdom would be established not by law and rule, but through His church – and we have already noted that Jesus’ disciples were His *ekklesia*. Jesus and the early church would confront the prevailing cultures with new symbols, new lifestyle rhythms, and a new Kingdom language. Community transformation is facilitated in relationship to the Triune God and His disciples.

Newbigin’s offers the following insight into this discussion about context, culture, community, and transformation:

How is the life of Christ, the life which is a true foretaste of the Kingdom, continued in the period between the ascension and the parousia?...It will not be by the universal application of an unchanging pattern of personal and social behavior as laid down in the faith and practice of Islam... It will be in the life of a

community which remembers, rehearses, and lives by the story which the Bible tells and of which the central focus is the story told in the New Testament.<sup>70</sup>

Christianity is not as religiously neat and tidy as Islam is, nor as some sects within Christendom are, regarding how to live, what to wear, what to eat, how to worship, what to think, etc. The Gospel is never “pure” argues Newbigin as it is never a “disembodied message” – it reflects its community.<sup>71</sup> Hence the ongoing tension within the Body of Christ between Kingdom living and the lifestyle defined by prevailing cultural norms. The church is charged in Romans 12:1 to discern what is biblically acceptable within cultural norms and what is unacceptable. Each believer and his church are necessarily contending with this tension.<sup>72</sup> The conversation about transforming culture requires careful cultural exegesis. “True contextualization,” Newbigin suggests, “accords the gospel its rightful primacy, its power to penetrate every culture and to speak within each culture in its own speech and symbol.”<sup>73</sup> It is of interest to note that Newbigin says that Scripture, apostolic ministry and sacraments are necessary to know, live, and tell the Gospel story. In the next section the connection between sacrament and community will be further developed.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 147.

<sup>71</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 141.

<sup>72</sup>This tension is a gift from God. It forces the church to learn to conflict, to discuss, to learn, to engage in community in order to celebrate and to embrace a unified vision. Contextualization is therefore Godly-awareness of a local church’s circumstances and culture. But in order to become aware and have this conversation the church must practice humility and deference to one another. Thus contextualization is a gift from God.

<sup>73</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 152.

<sup>74</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 147.

Niebuhr explains that culture is always first of all social. He explains that culture is received and transmitted socially.<sup>75</sup> To help transform a community, one must consider its culture(s) and one must be social. Denning makes a similar point, “ethnologists have shown that culture is transmitted mainly through stories, anecdotes, jokes, obiter dicta...but not in formal doctrines or axiomized theories.”<sup>76</sup> Greinacher and Motte concur, “so culture is best understood as a conversation constantly being constructed by those who participate in it.”<sup>77</sup> Again note the words *conversation* and *participate* – these are relational words. In short, cultural change can be facilitated by relationships; thus, community change is as a result of relationship.<sup>78</sup> These intentional relationships explore existing traditions, symbols, and language of the individual. Exploration leads to discussion and the opportunity to introduce the new Kingdom tradition, symbols, and language. If the goal is to help reform the *ekklesia tou Theou*, then Christians need to participate in intentional transformative relationships, which is part of the definition of discipleship.

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<sup>75</sup>Niebuhr, *Christ And Culture* , 33.

<sup>76</sup>Stephen Denning, *The Leader's Guide to Storytelling: Mastering the Art and Discipline of Business Narrative* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 205.

<sup>77</sup>Norbert Greinacher and Norbert Motte, *Christianity and Cultures* (London: SCM Press, 1994), 18-19.

<sup>78</sup>Ephesians 6 describes another force at work in the world that shapes basic assumptions: “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (6:12). This reality is to be confronted with spiritual courage (Ephesians 6:13-18) as disciples learn to participate in spiritual warfare.

## Discipleship: A Solution to Transforming Basic Assumptions

Discipleship is impossible without a practice of deculturation if we are not to conform to the pattern of this world.

--H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ And Culture*

Christ came into the world with the purpose of saving, not instructing it. At the same time – as is implied in his saving work – he came to be the pattern, to leave footprints for the person who would join him, who would be a follower.

--Soren Kierkegaard

Discipleship and church life do not live quite in tandem. One can disciple with or without the *ekklesia* active in the discipleship relationship. One can be a churchgoer and have little to do with discipleship. Petersen and Shamy make the point that “discipleship is in our vocabulary and our programs today, but discipleship does not characterize our churches.”<sup>79</sup> Jesus introduced *ekklesia* in the context of discipleship – to His disciples, for His disciples, and as a result of the work of His disciples<sup>80</sup> (see discussion on Matthew 16:18 above). If it is true that “churches simply do not do discipleship” as one Director of Discipleship asserted, then what is Christianity doing that is considered discipleship? Navigators, Campus Crusade, Intervarsity, Willowcreek, Saddleback, and Timothy Partners, to name a few, are among the more commonly used “discipleship materials.”<sup>81</sup> First, consider the phrase in quotation marks above. Why is there a resource section in the bookstore specifically identified as “discipleship materials”? Should not all Christian materials be in that section? This is telling: clearly discipleship is understood merely as an educational process which requires specific reading material; or as a season early in a

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<sup>79</sup>Jim Petersen and Mike Shamy, *The Insider: Bringing the Kingdom of God into your Everyday World* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 2003), 82.

<sup>80</sup>Willard explains further that there is little doubt that the New Testament is “about disciples and for disciples of Jesus Christ”. Dallas Willard, *The Great Sin of Omission: Reclaiming Jesus’ Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (San Francisco: Harper, 2006), 3.

<sup>81</sup>As per author’s interviews with FMCIC leaders (Chapter four).

believer's life necessitating self-help discipleship materials. One has only to peruse these materials to know that the intended audience is the new believer who needs to be grounded in the faith. The point is that discipleship is not being lived as a lifestyle as it was with Jesus and His apostles; rather, it has become relegated to being only a step one takes, or a task he has to accomplish in his Christian journey. In reality discipleship is not a step – it is a lifestyle. Publishers and para church ministries that market otherwise only contribute to a truncated understanding of discipleship.

Discipleship belongs to the church; in fact it will be the *modus operandi* of a healthy church family. Therefore, having already considered healthy Christian community and then cultural transformation, it stands to reason that an exploration of the concept of discipleship will complete an understanding of how discipleship can properly support the formation of the healthy Christian community. What is discipleship? Is it program, a class for new believers? Can it be accomplished at a distance through radio broadcasts or preaching, or on the internet? For instance Roy Ciampa asks this very good question: “What does it mean to make someone a disciple of Christ?” Ciampa’s answer is that a disciple “learns the teachings of the master and passes them on to others.”<sup>82</sup> The word disciple (Greek, *mathetes*) occurs 269 times in the New Testament,<sup>83</sup> and at least a couple of scholars are eager to point out that the words *Christian* and *disciple* are not biblically different words though some would like to understand a disciple as being in a higher

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<sup>82</sup>The article focuses on the essential nature of “going” and “making” disciples. Ciampa neglects to write about the method or means of going and making disciples. Ciampa is doctrinally correct in reminding the church that she needs to focus on disciple making, but in the research outlined in this project, church leaders already recognize this need. The church does not need reminding to go and make disciples, the church needs to learn to practice discipleship. Roy Ciampa, “Jesus and Discipleship: The View from the Great Commission,” *Contact*, vol. 38, no.1 [2010]: 4-8 (Gordon-Conwell), 7.

<sup>83</sup>Willard, *The Great Sin of Omission*, 3.

level of faith: “The common teaching is that... a disciple is a more serious Christian... I must be blunt: I find no biblical evidence for a separation of Christian from disciple.”<sup>84</sup>

*Mathetes* is used to “indicate total attachment to someone in discipleship... [And] the secular Greek usage of the word in the sense of apprentice, pupil or student is not found.”<sup>85</sup> This understanding is important in that a *disciple* is not merely a student, nor is she merely an apprentice. Two more criticisms of equating apprenticeship to discipleship should be noted: beyond not being nuanced in the word *mathetes*, apprentice highlights a task to be learned as opposed to the relationship; and apprenticeship implies that the master will make it his practice to step back so that the apprentice can learn to do the trade on her own. The term *apprentice* is not a sufficient understanding of disciple. A Greek word for teaching (*didasko*) means that discipleship obviously includes teaching and learning but it is not the extent of the word. Muller offers a list of “characteristics of discipleship at the time of the historical Jesus” and describes how Jesus would shape discipleship into something new.<sup>86</sup> Muller’s list includes the following:<sup>87</sup>

- Jesus was addressed as Rabbi (Mark 12:18, 9:5) though He “went beyond the recognized limits for a Rabbi, and this gives the disciple-master relationship its own distinctive coloring”
- In Rabbinic circles discipleship was voluntary; however, Christ’s call was decisive as He said “follow me” (Luke 5:1-11)

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<sup>84</sup>Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2006), 33.

<sup>85</sup>Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 486.

<sup>86</sup>Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 488-489.

<sup>87</sup>Muller (in Brown) lists nine characteristics; however, for the purposes of this paper, only six are mentioned. Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 488.

- Christ's disciples bound themselves not only to be a learner, but into "unconditional sacrifice of their life" to their Master. The Greek or Rabbinic pupils had as their aim to themselves become a master
- Whereas Rabbinic circles separated the clean pupils from the unclean, Christ changed the barriers – His disciples would minister among the sinners
- Unlike the Rabbinic disciples, the call to be discipled was also to Jesus a call to serve (i.e., they were called to be fishers of men)
- Being a disciple would mean to suffer – Christ suffered first and they would follow in His steps

These characteristics of discipleship show how Jesus was redefining the popular or common usage of the word *mathetes* to suit His new work in humanity. In John's Gospel the word *ekklesia* is not used; *mathetes* describes the gathering or followers of Jesus. In John's mind, it would appear, that *ekklesia* and *mathetes* are closely connected, if not entirely the same. This then prompts the question: who separated church and discipleship?

George Barna comments on one of his survey results that "not one of the adults we interviewed said that their goal in life was to be a committed follower of Jesus Christ or to make disciples of the entire world – or even the entire block!"<sup>88</sup> Discipleship and church-going are two different things in the mind of North American Christians, but not to Christ. Jesus' *mathetes* did not create the church (Jesus did), did not go to church, and did not *become* the church (they already were) – disciples were Jesus' *ekklesia*. His

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<sup>88</sup>Barna, *Revolution*, 11.

disciples were the expression of the church. Kierkegaard wrote that Jesus “never asks for admirers, worshipers or adherents. No, He calls disciples. It is not adherents of a teaching but followers of a life Christ is looking for.”<sup>89</sup> To be a Christian is to be a part of the church; to be a part of the church means to be a disciple - but what does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?

Bill Hull offers an organic definition of discipleship when he uses C.S. Lewis’ word *interference*. He explains that interference is good. “If you want to grow in a meaningful way, you not only must tolerate another person’s intimate knowledge of you, you must also willingly invite that person into your life. Even more startling, you’ll grow to love and depend on the interference.”<sup>90</sup> Clearly, discipleship is about relationship. It involves entering into another person’s space with the intention of being in that space with Christ, so that Christ can do His redemptive and sanctifying work there. The first chapter stated that discipleship is an intentional and organic process of formation through loving relationships marked by accountability, commitment, education, and encouragement to serve. Discipleship is lived within the context of church family. The primary purposes of discipleship are to help nurture vital Christian community, to foster proper worship of God and to help believers participate in His mission (worship-mission).

The word *intentional* means that the church must operate according to Christ’s pattern – being aware of the designs He created and applying them incarnationally to our culture. The word *organic* means natural as opposed to devised programs. Ogden’s second<sup>91</sup> reason for the low estate of discipleship in the church today is that the church

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<sup>89</sup>Kierkegaard, *Provocations*, 85.

<sup>90</sup>Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship*, 24-25.



leadership has tried to make disciples through “programs” while Christ’s pattern was that it would be through “relationships.”<sup>92</sup> Nothing more natural or organic exists than to desire to have relationship and to belong.<sup>93</sup> Ciampa writes that “Christian discipleship, according to Jesus, is about living out a relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”<sup>94</sup> Yes, Ciampa is right to describe the primacy of the believer’s relationship to the Trinity; but the pattern of discipleship Christ modeled and prayed for the church, involves believers’ relationships to one another, “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me”.<sup>95</sup> Christ was living and modeling oneness, so oneness was not a nebulous idea to Him. Oneness, according to Jesus, was the state of constant communion and interdependence. As Christ is one with His Father, a disciple is to be one with another disciple. Therefore the essence of discipleship, or to strengthen Ciampa’s discussion, discipleship is about disciples together living out a relationship with the Trinity.

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<sup>91</sup>Ogden outlines four notable reasons for the low estate of discipleship in the church today: 1. pastors have diverted from their primary calling; 2. the church has tried discipling through programs; 3. the church has reduced Christian life to the eternal benefits; 4. and discipleship is understood as being for “super Christians not ordinary ones.” Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Books, 2003) , 48.

<sup>92</sup>Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 42.

<sup>93</sup>John Townshend says that the first building block to shaping your character into the Christlikeness is the “ability to be attached and to attach to others”. Attachment, belonging, loving, being loved are surely a part of the image of God in humanity. John Townshend, *Hiding From Love: How to Change the Withdrawal Patterns that Isolate and Imprison You* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1991), 116.

<sup>94</sup>Ciampa, “*Jesus and Discipleship: The View from the Great Commission*”, 7.

<sup>95</sup>John 17:20-21 (NIV).

Discipleship is God's intentional yet organic means of creating a dynamic force that changes individuals and the world.<sup>96</sup> Ogden defines discipling as "an intentional relationship in which we walk alongside other disciples in order to encourage, equip and challenge one another in love to grow toward maturity in Christ. This includes equipping the disciple to teach others as well."<sup>97</sup> Ogden's definition does not take into account the organic nature of Jesus' lifestyle investment into His own disciples. The concept of "intentional" without an organic approach may lead to an understanding of discipleship as a ministry and a disciple as a project.<sup>98</sup>

Next the words *accountability*, *commitment*, and *education* were used. The term *mathetes* encompasses each of these in the secular usage of the word which Christ adopted; the concept grew to include love, and sacrifice.<sup>99</sup> Towards this end (accountability, etc.), John Wesley the founder of Methodism<sup>100</sup> used a very structured but highly relational model to disciple. "Class meetings" had the following rules:<sup>101</sup>

1. To meet once a week, at the least

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<sup>96</sup>*Simple Church* is an examination of de-programming church life, so to help Christians focus on their primary calling. Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples* (Nashville: Band H Publishing Group, 2006).

<sup>97</sup>Greg Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building your Life in Christ* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Books, 2007), 17.

<sup>98</sup>Another observation of Ogden's definition is that the concept of maturity: it is much too ambiguous in the Body of Christ. There is no agreement on what it means to be a mature Christian; however, worship and mission are less ambiguous. A disciple can begin to be a worshiper and missionary immediately and in her faith journey mature as a worshiper and missionary.

<sup>99</sup>Ogden offers three "environmental elements" necessary for transformation to occur in discipleship relationship: "Climatic Condition One: Transparent Trust; Climatic Condition Two: The Truth of God's Word; Climatic Condition Three: Mutual Accountability" (Chapter 8). These three conditions are represented in the working definition of discipleship that this thesis has created.

<sup>100</sup>Incidentally, the most popular reason why Wesley's movement was known as "Methodist" is that John had a structured (methodical) system to help a convert grow in her new journey with God: believe, join a class meeting, continue to worship at Sunday service, etc.

<sup>101</sup>John Wesley, *Rules for the "Band Societies"* (1738).

2. To come punctually at the hour appointed, without some extraordinary reason
3. To begin (those of us who are present) exactly at the hour with singing or prayer
4. To speak, each of us in order, freely and plainly the true state of our souls...
5. To end every meeting with prayer, suited to the state of each person present.

Wesley was quite methodical or systematic in his approach, but the context of the discipleship opportunity (or class meeting) was in a small group. The pulpit was important in helping nurture a new believer; Wesley preached several times every day. Books were important; Wesley wrote prolifically! But intentional relationship was also understood as essential to maturity in Christ. D. Michael Henderson writes that the overall impact of “Wesley’s system was a massive transformation, even civilization of the whole bottom level of England’s population.”<sup>102</sup> Wesley’s goal in creating class meetings was to sustain the revival work. Large numbers of people were coming to faith and they required accountability, commitment and Scriptural teaching. Wesley conceived the class meeting in order to disciple. Class meetings were a highly relational and intentional *method* (hence the name “Methodist”) to disciple.

Next, disciples of Jesus were not merely pupils but became fishers of men – individuals who would serve God by seeking and gathering the lost. Thus discipleship necessarily includes serving. And finally, *ekklesia* and discipleship are closely

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<sup>102</sup>D. Michael Henderson, *A Model for Making Disciples: John Wesley’s Class Meetings* (Indiana: Francis Asbury Press, 1997), 158.

intertwined in God's economy. Therefore, the working definition of discipleship follows: Discipleship is an intentional and organic process of formation through loving relationships marked by accountability, commitment, education, and encouragement to serve. Discipleship is lived within the context of church family. The primary purposes of discipleship are to help nurture vital Christian community, to foster proper worship of God and to help believers participate in His mission (worship-mission).

One point should be emphasized however: a relationship is discipleship only if Christ is the central player and purpose in the time together. In a relationally based understanding of discipleship, all parties are free to listen to the leading of the Holy Spirit as to how to proceed in each new life season. If Christ is the focus of the relationship, did He leave directions for encountering Him further? This is the topic of the next chapter.

### Summary

What is a healthy Christian community and how can discipleship properly support its formation? A healthy Christian community understands the centrality of Christ and worships Him. It understands that each member is summoned by God to be a part of this dynamic force called the *ekklesia tou Theou*. And it is from within this transformative context (church) that the mission of God is given and exercised in the world. The problem is that there are 112 million churchless Christians. A significant portion (85%) of the Body of Christ is not healthy according to the Natural Church Development Survey. The church is established and more institutional than missional. It is not what it

could be. The church's culture can be transformed through biblically healthy relationships. A healthy community is a worshipping and missional community.

Culture takes the material of certain gross, biological givens – that we must eat and procreate, that we inevitably face conflict with others – and refines them in varied, multitudinous ways... These ways, in turn, correspond with what people understand to be the basic meaning and purpose of staying alive. Individuals stop living when they give up, when they decide life is just not worth the struggle any longer. Cultures also begin to die when their spirits falter and their inhabitants suspect existence is futile.... So it is not just an etymological accident that the root of the word *culture* is *cultus*, or worship. Worship is about assigning and recognizing worthiness – and ultimate worthiness at that.<sup>103</sup>

The connection between mission and worship seems naturally a part of the human condition: humans are wired to be missional and worshipers. Culture is transformed in both understanding worship and mission and exercising them. Relationships, culture's most base structure, are the means of learning and practicing the Kingdom culture.

Each God-centered healthy conflict, or discussion can un-corrupt an old point of view, dislodge strongholds, or offer a new perspective. Jesus affirmed this basic building block in saying about community, “for where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.”<sup>104</sup> Discipleship, the church's basic building block, can properly support healthy Christian community formation.

Jesus also offered His disciples sacraments that would contribute to the vitality of the Kingdom community. The context of these sacraments is in discipleship relationships (i.e., Jesus gave His disciples the Lord's Supper). In the following chapter the Wesleyan view of sacrament will be explored. The synthesis of sacrament and discipleship, or

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<sup>103</sup>Rodney Clapp, *A Peculiar People: The Church As a Culture in a Post-Christian Society* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2006), 94.

<sup>104</sup>Matthew 18:20.

sacramental discipleship, is the strategic goal and end result of healthy community of faith.

## CHAPTER THREE:

### SACRAMENT AND HEALTHY COMMUNITY

Discipleship is a formative process that the FMCIC should more formally embrace that would confront the prevailing culture and the current FMCIC culture and bring a new vitality into the local church. Discipleship, as expressed in Methodist Class meetings, is after all a Wesleyan distinctive. The curriculum and agenda of discipleship could be focused on another important element of Wesleyan theology: the themes and purposes of the Lord's Supper.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus left particular instructions to help His disciples live in community. Many Christians know these practices, ordained by Christ, as sacraments.<sup>2</sup> John Wesley reminds us that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is "as it were, his [Jesus'] dying words to all his followers."<sup>3</sup> Of all the words Christ could have spoken at this specific Passover meal He chose these as His final directives. Understood correctly then, communion will contribute significantly to Jesus' plan for His *ekklesia*.

In chapter one, sacrament is defined as: rites and processes instituted by Christ that facilitate opportunities to grow in worship and mission. They are not private religious

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<sup>1</sup>Five Eucharistic themes and purposes are described in this chapter. However the extent of communion is not only in understanding the doctrine, but also in the actual event of partaking in the meal. Therefore liturgy is also a part of the sacramental discipleship rhythm that is outlined in this study. Appendix C offers a resource to having a discipleship conversation about the communion service and an invitation for discipleship relationships to also create their own liturgies using the traditional elements outlined in Appendix C.

<sup>2</sup>Donald Goertz writes that the two great symbols of baptism and Eucharist "capture the essence of the story and give shape to all worship." Goertz, Donald. "Toward A Missional Theology of Worship," *Theology of Mission*, class notes (Toronto: Tyndale University and Seminary, 2009), 5.

<sup>3</sup>John Wesley, "Sermon One Hundred One: The Duty of Constant Communion," *The Sermons of John Wesley: 1872 Edition*, ed. Jackson Thomas (Northwest Nazarene University: Wesley Center Online, 1993-2005), II.1.

moments; rather sacraments were created to be lived *in* community, *by* community and to nurture healthy community. Sacraments are more than mere symbols<sup>4</sup> of spiritual realities; they represent opportunities for supernatural encounters with God and His community. This chapter explores Holy Communion in its biblical context. The discussion progresses to consider the Wesleyan view of the sacraments. Understanding the sacramental theology of John Wesley and his brother Charles will give understanding to the present doctrine and practice of the FMCIC. Having defined these terms scripturally, a synthesis of sacrament and discipleship is presented as a pathway to healthy community reformation. Is discipleship the vehicle by which communion is taught and practiced, or is the general practice that sacrament and discipleship are unpacked individually and understood primarily as separate and even exclusive from one another?

A broad overview of sacrament from a scriptural then a Roman Catholic, Reform, Wesleyan and finally a [post] modern evangelical perspective are explained.<sup>5</sup>

### **Sacrament of Communion: Old Testament**

The theological journey to understanding the sacrament of communion begins in the Old Testament. *Remembrance* is a prominent Old Testament theme. God encouraged His people, warned His people and even pleaded with His people to remember Him and

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<sup>4</sup>There is a healthy discussion in the literature as to whether a sacrament is a “sign” or “symbol”. This paper chooses to use the word “symbol”. As Worgul aptly states: “all symbols are signs. A symbol, however, is more potent than other signs. It is supercharged with a meaning which is not created, but discovered by humankind. Symbols reach down to the depths of reality. They are ontological in character.” George S. Worgul Jr., “Redefining the Term ‘Sacrament’”, *From Magic to Metaphor* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 123-128.

<sup>5</sup> John and Charles were Church of England ministers. In order to understand the foundations of their theology, Roman Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist is briefly explored.



His covenant with them. It was essential that they remember so Israel could fulfill God's purposes for her in the world. Remembering offered God's people the opportunity to know and affirm their identity; it nurtured community. Remembering helped Israel enter into worship and it fed their faith (in order to accomplish God's directives). Psalm 78:2-11 encapsulates well the benefits of remembering.

I will utter hidden things, things from of old - what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done... Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands... They forgot what he had done, the wonders he had shown them.

Israel had an amazing capacity to "forget" (cf. verse 11), the opposite of the Old Testament concept of "remembering". Forgetting was not a lapse in memory; rather it was a lapse in judgment, faith, and obedience. When Israel forgot God's covenant with her, the consequences included broken community (Malachi 2:10 for example), separation from God and His covenantal promises, and aimlessness (i.e., wandering in a desert, or exile). It was in their seasons of remembering that Israel enjoyed all the promises of the covenant. The Hebrew word for remember, *zakar*, has a "close relation between hearing and obeying – that is, to remember is to obey."<sup>6</sup> *Zakar* has three groups of meanings: 1. completely inward mental acts such as remembering or paying attention to; 2. mental acts accompanied by corresponding external acts; and 3. forms of audible speaking with such meanings as recite or invoke.<sup>7</sup> Interestingly it is "frequently difficult"

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<sup>6</sup>R.L. Harris, G. Archer and B. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 1 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 241-242.

<sup>7</sup>Harris, et al, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* explain that the "cognate evidence indicates that this third group of meanings is closest to the verb's root meaning." Additionally to remember is often equivalent to "to be mentioned" as per H.W.F. Gesenius, *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1979), 245.

to discern which of the above meanings best fits a particular passage.<sup>8</sup> *Zakar* then is not primarily to be understood as a mental activity; general usage dictates that *zakar* is mental with a corresponding action. Frank Gaebelein illustrates the interaction between remembering and the concomitant action in the word *zakar* (translated *memorial*) in his exegesis of Exodus 2:14-15:

And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" Moreover God said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This *is* My name forever, and this *is* My memorial to all generations."

Here memorial is not a "simple recollection or remembrance."<sup>9</sup> The name "I AM" would be used for the "act of uttering the mighty deeds of God throughout all generations" as a community – the community of God. In reverently remembering His name, Israel would "share in the praise of the essence, power and significance of 'I am He who is, was and will be.'"<sup>10</sup> God offered His people remembering as one of the shared experiences. These remembering experiences promoted identity, community, worship, and faith.<sup>11</sup>

### *Remembering Nurtured Identity*

In the Old Testament identity was nurtured by telling God's story with His people using words, songs, psalms, memorials, ritual, festivals, etc. For instance Joshua

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<sup>8</sup>Gesenius, *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*, 241-242.

<sup>9</sup>Frank Gaebelein, ed. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Regency Reference Library, 1990), 321-322.

<sup>10</sup>Gaebelein, ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 321-322.

<sup>11</sup>The Tabernacle that the people of Israel were instructed to make and take with them was a life size instrument of remembrance of the Sinai experience. First the ancient Hebrew would encounter the altar, the wash basin, the candle, the incense and then the ark. This sequence tells the Sinai story: altar at Sinai, the washing, the burning bush, the pillar of fire, the cloud and then the word of the Lord.

appointed twelve men, one from each tribe, to carry a stone from the Jordan “to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’ tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD.” He explained that “these stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever.”<sup>12</sup> The children of Israel would *remember* God’s faithfulness to them and in so doing would remember that they were chosen by God for His good purposes – so much so that God would make a path for His children even through a river. When the children of Israel remembered historical encounters with God, it promoted an understanding of their manifest destiny or identity. The people of Israel were constantly reminded of their story, their history and consequently their *raison d’être*.<sup>13</sup>

### *Remembering Nurtured Community*

The context of the passages considered thus far is to the community (i.e., “Tell *them*”). Israel’s identity is nurtured in the remembering of a shared story. An individual Israelite belongs to the family of God. His identity is nurtured here. But to be clear, an Israelite belonged—his identity was intricately connected—to his people. When God’s people shared in the experience of hearing the Word of the Lord read aloud (a shared

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<sup>12</sup>Joshua 4:6-9.

<sup>13</sup>For a wonderful illustrative discussion of “remember” read C.S. Lewis’ *The Silver Chair*. Aslan (the Lion who represents Christ) commissions a “human child” to remember His directives in order to accomplish His mission for she and her friend. Aslan explains that the children will have a better time remembering while they are with Him, but once they begin the journey the plan will not be as easy to remember. Aslan explains, “But first, remember, remember, remember the signs. Say them to yourself when you wake in the morning and when you lie down at night, and when you wake in the middle of the night. And whatever strange things may happen to you, let nothing turn your mind from following the signs. And secondly, I give you a warning. Here on the mountain I have spoken to you clearly: I will not often do so down in Narnia. Here on the mountain, the air is clear and your mind is clear; as you drop down into Narnia, the air will thicken. Take great care that it does not confuse your mind. And the signs which you have learned here will not look at all as you expect them to look, when you meet them there...” C.S. Lewis, *The Silver Chair* (London: Collins Publishing Group, 1988), 27.

remembering), they repented together and enjoyed God's favorable response together (see Ezra 10). In the camp, when an individual sinned like Achan did (Joshua 7), all shared in the consequence. God loves individuals and His plan includes using His people as a community to love and form each person.

### *Remembering Nurtured Worship*

Where remembering can help with identity and community (for example, an ancient Hebrew might say to his child, "your great grandfather ate manna here – see how God provided for *our* family!"), it also promotes worship (i.e., again the ancient Hebrew might say, "and let's give God thanks for His provision!" Note Psalm 78:4 where one generation is telling the "praiseworthy" story to the next generation). Psalm 105:1-2 says, "Give thanks to the Lord, call on His name; make known among the nations what He has done. Sing to Him, sing praise to Him; tell of all His wonderful acts." Suffice it to say that remembering can lead to gratitude and all forms of worship. And, naturally, remembering grows faith.

### *Remembering Nurtured Faith*

"He gave them the lands of the nations and they fell heir to what others had toiled for – that they might keep his precepts and observe His laws."<sup>14</sup> The book of Hebrews also reminds God's people of what they have gone through and how God was faithful;

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<sup>14</sup> Psalm 105:44-45.

this faithfulness should only grow a believer's "confidence."<sup>15</sup> Israel was braver when it remembered (*zakar*) God before and even during a battle.

The Feast of the Passover is a comprehensive example of the nurturing benefits of *zakar*. At the Passover, Israel remembers both their shared misery in captivity and their shared joy in deliverance. They celebrate freedom, and God's power to provide. Passover and the other shared liturgies and feasts helped the people of Israel in continuing to be a nation. *Zakar* then was the means for the people of God to know their identity, to enjoy community, to enter into worship, and to grow in faith. Furthermore, the benefits of *zakar* parallel the linear journey of faith outlined earlier in the paper. A solid doctrine of Trinity parallels the Old Testament's call to "remember God and His covenant." A healthy ecclesiology is paralleled by *zakar*'s power to help a community know her identity and purposes. As a local church remembers God's mighty deeds, she worships and the mission is spurred on. This Old Testament theme, remembering, is also important in the New Testament.

### **Sacrament of Communion: New Testament**

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in **remembrance** of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in **remembrance** of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.  
--1 Corinthians 11:23-28

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<sup>15</sup>Hebrews 10:35.

The same benefits of remembering uncovered in the Old Testament *zakar* are evident in the New Testament equivalent *anamnesin*. A full discussion of the meaning of this New Testament term is in the next section of this chapter. At this point, in order to discuss pertinent New Testament passages about communion, *anamnesin* is defined as a command both to remember Christ's sacrifice *and* to encounter the living Christ. To *anamnesin* (which English Bibles generally translate "remember") is not merely to recollect. In fact, the concept is similar to *zakar*.

### *Remembering Nurtures Identity and Community*

Paul the Apostle uses technical language receiving (*parelabon*) and passed on (*paredoka*) in order to highlight that the Lord's Supper was an established tradition.<sup>16</sup> He states that Christ had established this tradition and, through a process of repetition, these words were an early church liturgy.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore Jesus established this sacrament in the Passover season, which ties the New Testament *anamnesin* neatly into the Old Testament concept of *zakar*. Remembering, therefore, continues to be essential to God's mission in the New Testament as it was in the Old.

Paul wrote, "when you come together as a church." Implied is that the church will and does come together. The Lord's Supper is a shared experience; in fact, the context of each reference for the Lord's Supper is communal. Paul explains that "because there is

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<sup>16</sup>Though the Gospels also describe the Last Supper, Paul's apostolic teaching to the Corinthians about the Eucharist includes an early church liturgy and a theological statement which was written to instruct the church, and help her remain vital. The Corinthians and the rest of Christendom are given a proper understanding and practice of the sacrament of the Lord's Table. 1 Corinthians 11 can therefore serve as an adequate summary of the biblical themes and practice of the Eucharist.

<sup>17</sup>W. Harold Mare and Murray Harris, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 87.

one loaf, we who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.”<sup>18</sup> There is no reference to anyone taking communion alone. Rodney Clapp describes the Eucharist as the “preeminently social and cultural act of eating.”<sup>19</sup> Communion is Christ’s genius wherein life’s most apparent basic need (eating) is the pathway to understanding life’s truest need (God). Clapp explains that language has expanded to facilitate the acquisition and preparation of food.<sup>20</sup> Food supplies, technology (such as more efficient killing, storing, cooking), distribution, even morality issues (sharing food, destroying food) are all a part of cultural formation. “Eating then necessitates our involvement with others” and becomes the means of creating community.<sup>21</sup> As noted in chapter two, it is necessary to contend with basic cultural assumptions in order to transform a community. Eating is a basic cultural experience, and in eating the New Covenant’s Meal (the Eucharist) a new basic assumption is introduced into community. The believer’s opportunity in the Eucharist is to eat and experience a new culture – that of the Kingdom.<sup>22</sup>

Consider the meta-story of Scripture with regards to shared life. As noted earlier, some Christians today believe that they can thrive even though they are disconnected from the Body of Christ. Often language like “I do not have to go to church to be a Christian” is used and the church nods acquiescently in agreement, even though the biblical evidence tells another story. The meta-story is that God created one man (Adam)

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<sup>18</sup>1 Corinthians 10:17.

<sup>19</sup>Rodney Clapp, *A Peculiar People: The Church As a Culture in a Post-Christian Society* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2006), 106.

<sup>20</sup>Clapp, *A Peculiar People*, 106.

<sup>21</sup>Clapp, *A Peculiar People*, 106.

<sup>22</sup>A simple and readable discussion resource for a Bible study, personal or otherwise, about the nature of the Eucharist is Rob Bell and Don Golden, *Jesus Wants to Save Christians: A Manifesto For the Church in Exile* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2008).

and God decided that in all creation only one thing was not good: aloneness. So God created family. God then used a family, Abraham's family, to form a nation. The story of Israel with God is a story for all people, in that all nations would see God's faithfulness to Israel and all nations would also want this experience with God. In His time, the right time in history, God came and offered a new covenant; the new covenant people were the *ekklesia* of God. He would help this community understand her identity as being a family, an army, a body, and a building. Each of these metaphors emphasizes the interconnectedness and dependence of the individual parts to one another. Shared life is the story of both the Old and New Testaments. The meta-story of Scripture is that each part, each believer, is to live his life literally sharing space with others – in fact, Christianity is not to be lived outside of *ekklesia*. For the fullness of community to be enjoyed, God has in place systems and rites that believers can participate in and that the Holy Spirit empowers. Communion is a community event and is part of the meta-story of Scripture. In communion we share a memory and an experience.

“A person without a memory cannot be trusted.”<sup>23</sup> This is not to say that the person is bad, but that the person without a memory has no reference point from which to grow. Healing begins, for instance in Alcoholics Anonymous, when one acknowledges one's present state and need.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, communion is designed to offer an opportunity to acknowledge one's present state of being and need. Communion therefore can facilitate self-awareness. By understanding one's true identity according to Christ, the

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<sup>23</sup>The opening statement at each of Barrie Free Methodist's "Belonging" classes – membership class (2009).

<sup>24</sup>“Almost none of us liked the self-searching, the leveling of pride, the confession of shortcomings which the process requires for successful consummation.” *Alcoholic Anonymous*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (New York: Alcoholic Anonymous World Services, Inc), 25.



individual can mature and become whole. A believer is a child of God and a brother or sister to all other believers. "The breaking of bread signifies the intention to share it, to give it to others, thus portraying the character of Christ's body."<sup>25</sup> It is an opportunity to take for oneself, and share with the family of God. In that moment of communion a Christian remembers foundational truth about her identity.

Built into communion is a mechanism to safeguard community against disunity and division. Reconciliation is a dynamic opportunity in the communion service described in 1 Corinthians 11.<sup>26</sup> Communion is essentially a community event. The genius of communion is that an individual believer cannot (or should not) leave the communion table, and continue to harbour un-forgiveness, participate in disunity, gossip, or any other sin that could damage a community. Communion is where spiritual resolves are made and are sealed with bread and wine. Christ has offered the Eucharist as an agent for cultural change. Rodney Clapp addresses the Christian community this way:

Our regular practice of the Eucharist is a practice in accepting God's forgiveness and in forgiving one another. We should remember that not every culture has this resource.... Forgiveness is a communal resource, perhaps the keystone of Christian politics, a resource and keystone that can enable us to face failure and conflict without destroying ourselves in the process. Because we have this resource, we should not cower before the prospect of failure or try to deny and hide our conflict.<sup>27</sup>

Clearly Clapp envisions the sacrament of communion as the pathway the *ekklesia* should be taking. A regular diet of communion will promote unity, contend with conflict,

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<sup>25</sup>Clapp, *A Peculiar People*, 108.

<sup>26</sup>Note the context of Paul's concern is that the community is not caring for each other. The community is not respecting each other and Paul speaks firmly, "shall I praise you for this? Certainly not!" (v.22). Paul's directives then are to "wait for each other," "examine yourselves." In other words, Paul is teaching the church that the Lord's Supper is a community event, and it is time to get things right with God and each other!

<sup>27</sup>Clapp, *A Peculiar People*, 110.

empower and encourage greater risks for the Kingdom. A reconciled community is a missional community, as Healthy Doctrine of Trinity (remembering Christ's sacrifice and the totality of the activity of the Trinity in the creation of the New Covenant) → Healthy Ecclesiology → Effective Worship-Mission.

### *Remembering Nurtures Worship and Faith (Mission)*

Mare and Harris explain that the "statement 'you proclaim' (1Corinthians 11:26) involves the personal application of the meaning of the Lord's death in the believer's testimony."<sup>28</sup> The proclamation is a personal declaration; however, the context of this pericope is plural – communal. Proclaiming Christ's death is a personal discipline to be exercised in community. Furthermore, proclamation is an act of worship and mission. Faith, after all, is in essence acting on what we believe to be true – it is mission. In communion a believer is proclaiming the necessity of the cross for every person. This is worship and mission, as the believer celebrates by proclaiming in Eucharist the meaningfulness of Christ's death and resurrection in her own life. The proclamation made in communion should also be reflected in the believer's lifestyle.

"Do this in remembrance of me [*touto poieite eis ten emen anamnesin*]."<sup>29</sup> As is mentioned earlier, *anamnesin* is a command both to remember Christ's sacrifice *and* to encounter the living Christ. Communion offers the believer the opportunity to learn biblical truth and to consider the implications of Christ's sacrifice for her life. These two opportunities (Bible truth and encounter) should remain together but too often, they are

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<sup>28</sup> Mare and Harris, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: 1 and 2 Corinthians*, 87.

<sup>29</sup> 1Corinthians 11:26.

separated. One can be a student of the Bible but not have a vital relationship with God; conversely, one can claim to have a friendship with God but know little about His Word. Communion ensures that these two are practiced in tandem.

The Lord's Supper is "God entertaining man at his own table".<sup>30</sup> At God's table then, a believer can learn her identity, and worship her Father who is present at the meal. It should be a disciple's resolve to perpetually mine the richness of the truths surrounding the Lord's Supper. While reading the section of Wesley's invitational hymn below, make specific note of the question marks. Wesley gave the *ekklesia* a hymn through which they could marvel at the work of Christ and resolve to ask more about it:

O the depth of love divine  
Th' unfathomable grace!  
Who shall say how bread and wine  
God into man conveys?  
How the bread his flesh imparts  
How the wine transmits his blood  
Fills his faithful peoples hearts  
With all the life of God?<sup>31</sup>

Consider the last line in this hymn, "with all the life of God [in His people's hearts.]"

Scripture explains that God, in the new covenant, now takes up residence in a believer.<sup>32</sup>

It is every believer's opportunity to have consistent encounters with a living God.

Communion facilitates this experience. In every encounter with God, the individual is changed. The disciple recognizes more of his own depravity and his need for a Savior.

But by grace, the Lord forgives and embraces the repentant follower inviting her into

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<sup>30</sup>Ole Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments: A Definitive Study of John Wesley's Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Francis Asbury Press, 1972), 184.

<sup>31</sup>Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments*, 185.

<sup>32</sup>John 14:17 says "for He lives with you and will be in you."

worship and then mission. In 1 Corinthians 11:28, Paul writes that a “man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.”<sup>33</sup> He directs disciples to prayerfully “discern” themselves.<sup>34</sup> Staples rightly comments that this passage is an invitation for disciples to participate in the Holy Spirit’s work of sanctification.<sup>35</sup> God initiates His grace and it is a person’s opportunity to appropriate His gifts of justification and sanctification. The work of sanctification is not only a washing away of sins, but it is a purposeful cleaning for Kingdom service.

Self-examination in communion is the believer’s opportunity to prepare her heart in preparation for the Eucharist. Interestingly Wesley believed that it was “highly expedient” but “not absolutely necessary” to do the work of self-examination prior to taking the Bread and Wine, as this would happen naturally as the repentant believer participated in the rite.<sup>36</sup> Godly self-examination always leads to repentance and life transformation. In addition to dealing with sins, the communion experience nurtures the believer. At His Table God feeds a disciple’s soul, as Wesley explains:

Is not the eating of that bread and the drinking of that cup the outward visible means, whereby God conveys into our souls all that spiritual grace, that righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, which were purchased by the body of Christ once broken and the blood of Christ once shed for us? Let all, therefore, who truly desire the grace of God, eat of that bread and drink of that cup.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>1 Corinthians 11:28.

<sup>34</sup>F.W. Grosheide, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), 275.

<sup>35</sup>Rob Staples, *Outward Sign and Inward Grace: The Place of Sacraments in Wesleyan Spirituality* (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1991), 204.

<sup>36</sup>John Wesley, “Sermon One Hundred One: The Duty of Constant Communion,” *The Sermons of John Wesley: 1872 Edition*, ed. Jackson Thomas (Northwest Nazarene University: Wesley Center Online, 1993-2005), I.6.

<sup>37</sup>John Wesley, “Sermon One Hundred One: The Duty of Constant Communion,” III.12.

The Old Testament theme *zakar* was manifest in the numerous feasts on the Hebrew calendar and also in the daily pattern of life, which included remembering God as the people “walked along the road, as they lay down and as they got up.” In the New Testament God offers a new rhythm for His people to step into and *anamnesis* (remember): sacraments. In remembering, the disciple has the opportunity to learn his identity, consider the state of his own soul, worship, have his soul fed with the grace of God, and re-affirm his resolve in mission. The biblical discipline of remembering contributes significantly to human development. How then has the church incorporated remembering in her practice and lifestyle?

### **Sacrament of Communion: Christian Perspectives**

“Take and eat; this is my body... Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant...”.<sup>38</sup> In Christendom the theological spectrum of understanding of communion can be linearly graphed as transubstantiation on one side of the spectrum and consubstantiation on the other.<sup>39</sup> Transubstantiation, the dogma of the Roman Catholic church, is the “changing of the substance of the bread and wine into the substance of the body and blood of Christ”; whereas, consubstantiation means that Christ is present “in, with, and under the elements, although they are not essentially (substantially) altered.”<sup>40</sup> Jesus did not use the word for metamorphosis in the Matthew 26 passage, nor, for that

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<sup>38</sup>Matthew 26:27-28.

<sup>39</sup>Protestant and Catholic understandings of the sacraments are “complex” but the “fundamental difference consists in the respective conceptions (i.e. Roman Catholic and Protestant) of faith, grace, and the Word of God.” Van A. Harvey, *A Handbook of Theological Terms* (New York: Collier Books, 1964), 213.

<sup>40</sup>Harvey, *A Handbook of Theological Terms*, 58.

matter, in any passage about communion. There is no indication that the bread or wine is transformed substantially into His body. Interestingly though, Jesus does not use the word *like* in this passage. He is not comparing the bread and wine to His body.<sup>41</sup> Jesus explicitly claims neither that the bread is transformed, nor that the elements are merely symbolic. Therefore the most satisfying reading of Matthew 26 acknowledges what is clearly written (i.e., “this *is* my body and this *is* my blood”) and embraces the mystery.<sup>42</sup> The Eucharist joins the ranks of the mystery of the Trinity, prayer, fasting, etc.<sup>43</sup> Feasting on communion and plunging into the deep waters of baptism are to feast and plunge into the vastness (mystery) of God that will be fully revealed only after this present life.

The Greeks used the word *mysterion* to describe the genuine awareness of the presence of the supernatural. Paul chose this word in his writings, for instance 1 Corinthians 15:51.<sup>44</sup> However, *mysterion*, as it is used in Scripture, does not refer to the sacraments. In the late second century, the church father Tertullian of Carthage used the Latin word *sacramentum* to translate *mysterion*. *Sacramentum* was a Roman military term for the “sacred oath” taken as one entered the Imperial army.<sup>45</sup> It was Tertullian who first used the word *sacramentum* to mean Christian initiation rites. He offered the Church an understanding of the dynamic of the Body of Christ: that as the Church meets, Christ

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<sup>41</sup> Vander Zee presents his view that a sacrament is little more than symbol when he writes, “Sacraments are material things that point beyond themselves to their Creator. They are windows into divine reality.” Leonard Vander Zee, *Christ, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper: Recovering the Sacraments for Evangelical Worship* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), 17.

<sup>42</sup>For a more thorough discussion from a Wesleyan scholar about these two opposing doctrines read Rob Staples’, *Outward Sign and Inward Grace*, 211-228.

<sup>43</sup>The purposes of fasting are outlined in Scripture (i.e. how, when, even why). However, how fasting moves the hand of God, or how it is used in the providence of God is not described. This then makes fasting a mystery that a believer embraces obediently.

<sup>44</sup>Staples, *Outward Sign and Inward Grace*, 8.

<sup>45</sup>Staples, *Outward Sign and Inward Grace*, 9.

is also meeting with His bride, having initiated the gathering, empowering the body with gifts, and her mission.<sup>46</sup> This is the great *mysterion* and *sacramentum* reality. Robert Webber summarizes: "The sacraments are the events in which the members of Christ's body encounter the saving will of God in Christ and respond to that initiative. The church's worship celebration uses material things... or words or gestures in order to reveal and make present the saving words and deeds of Christ."<sup>47</sup> Webber's statement begs the question as to whether Christ is present in the sacrament, initiating grace into the worshiper's life, or sacrament is merely an action or symbol in a religious ceremony that helps focus the worshiper's attention at God. Professor Donald Goertz describes a historical shift in thinking as a result of rationalism with "its [rationalism] absolute priority on the individual and their choice."<sup>48</sup> Goertz explains,

Prior to the Enlightenment a symbol was seen as being necessarily connected to that which it symbolized. In our primary symbols, this perspective will then shift the weight, placing it squarely on God's action. Our actions are always a response. Sacraments then become a dynamic movement played out in re-enactment through the use of symbol, beginning with God, moving to our response and back again to God.<sup>49</sup>

For instance, the Reformer Ulrich Zwingli argued against the Catholic and Lutheran view and in favor of a more contemporary rational, hence symbolic understanding of the Lord's Supper:

EIGHTHLY-I believe that in the holy Eucharist, i.e., the supper of thanksgiving, the true body of Christ is present by the contemplation of faith. This means that they who thank the Lord for the benefits bestowed on us in His Son acknowledge

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<sup>46</sup>Robert Webber, *The Complete Library of Christian Worship*, vol. 6, *The Sacred Actions of Christian Worship* (Nashville: Star Song Publishing, 1994), 82.

<sup>47</sup>Webber, *The Complete Library of Christian Worship*, 82.

<sup>48</sup>Goertz, "Toward A Missional Theology of Worship", 6.

<sup>49</sup>Goertz, "Toward A Missional Theology of Worship", 6.

that He assumed true flesh, in it truly suffered, truly washed away our sins by His blood; and thus everything done by Christ becomes as it were present to them by the contemplation of faith. But that the body of Christ in essence and really, i. e., the natural body itself, is either present in the supper or masticated with our mouth and teeth, as the Papists or some [i.e., the Lutherans] who look back to the fleshpots of Egypt assert, we not only deny, but constantly maintain to be an error, contrary to the Word of God. This, with the divine assistance, I will in a few words, make as clear as the sun to your majesty, O Emperor. First, by citing the divine oracles; secondly, by attacking the opponents with arguments derived therefrom, as with military engines; lastly, by showing that the ancient theologians held our opinion.<sup>50</sup>

According to this reformer, Christ is “present by the contemplation of faith.” Earlier in his document, Zwingli states that he believes, “that all the sacraments are so far from conferring grace that they do not even convey or dispense it.” Furthermore, he says that “a channel or vehicle is not necessary to the Spirit, for He Himself is the virtue and energy whereby all things are borne, and has no need of being borne; neither do we read in the Holy Scriptures that visible things, as are the sacraments, carry certainly with them the Spirit, but if visible things have ever been borne with the Spirit, it has been the Spirit, not the visible things that have done the being.”<sup>51</sup> To the rationalist camp the believer’s individual heart condition, and personal effort in and of itself determines the efficacy of the event.<sup>52</sup> Zwingli was schooled and mentored by biblical humanists but came to accept the evangelical position (for instance, sola scriptura and Luther’s high view of grace).<sup>53</sup> Zwingli understood communion as a mere remembrance, and Luther’s position about the

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<sup>50</sup>Huldreich Zwingli, *The Latin Works and Correspondence of Huldreich Zwingli*, vol. 2, trans. S.M. Macauley (Philadelphia: Heidelberg Press, 1922), 42-56.

<sup>51</sup>Zwingli, *The Latin Works and Correspondence of Huldreich Zwingli*, 43.

<sup>52</sup>Goertz, “*Toward A Missional Theology of Worship*”, 6.

<sup>53</sup>Williston Walker et al., *A History of the Christian Church*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1985), 441-447.



“corporeal presence of Christ was an unreasonable remnant of Catholic superstition.”<sup>54</sup>

Willston Walker describes Zwingli as the “most politically gifted of any of the reformers” and should be understood as a grandfather to reform, if John Calvin is a father of reform. The author explains it this way, “The Swiss movement, as a whole, was to be modified and greatly developed by the genius of Calvin; and to the churches that trace their spiritual parentage to him, and thus to Zwingli, the name *Reformed* as distinguished from *Lutheran*, was ultimately given.”<sup>55</sup> Interestingly Calvin is understood as standing “partway between Luther and Zwingli” with regards Christ’s presence in the Lord’s Supper.<sup>56</sup> Calvin writes that Jesus “declares that his flesh is the meat, his blood the drink, of my soul; I give my soul to him to be fed with such food... the symbols of bread and wine”.<sup>57</sup> The Reform’s rationalism stands in sharp contrast to the more mystical Catholic tradition.

The Catholic-Reform divide is further accentuated in 1 Corinthians 11:24, “do this in remembrance of me [*touto poieite eis ten emen anamnesin*].” The word translated remembrance (*anamnesin*) in the Reform tradition is necessarily interpreted in its most base understanding: to be reminded, to have memory or recollection of an event.<sup>58</sup> Brown aptly points out that the most common usage of the Greek word *anamnesin* underwent

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<sup>54</sup>Walker et al., *A History of the Christian Church*, 446.

<sup>55</sup>Walker et al., *A History of the Christian Church*, 447.

<sup>56</sup>Walker et al., *A History of the Christian Church*, 475.

<sup>57</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Wm. B.Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989), 4.17.32.

<sup>58</sup>Colin Brown ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986 ), 230-246.

“significant expansion of meaning” particularly in relation to public worship.<sup>59</sup> This is important because a common-usage understanding for *anamnesis* does not take into account the much richer experience a believer can have in remembering, much more than merely bringing an event to mind. However, the Roman Catholic tradition, which adheres to the doctrine of the real presence of Christ in the elements, has a doctrine of Eucharistic sacrifice in relation to remembrance. Brown summarizes the Catholic view this way: “the recalling before God of the one sacrifice of Christ in all its accomplished and effectual fullness so that it is here and now operative by its effects in the souls of the redeemed.”<sup>60</sup> The Catholic view does take into account the richness of the biblical theme of remembering. In the Old Testament, Israel’s geographical landscape and stories were filled with memorials: stone altars, landmarks such as a river or mountain, festivals and holy days. Each memorial helped God’s people remember Him. Each was a place or time of worship wherein the worshiper was active in remembering *to* God, *to* himself and *to* others. And since God is present in the worship of His people, remembering was a place of meeting – an encounter with God. In 1 Corinthians 11 and in each of the Gospel narratives, Jesus ordained an experience of remembering that was clearly not limited to simply recollecting an event. It was more.

John Flavel a Puritan thinker (1627-1691) represents a memorialist view as he writes “The Lord’s Supper comes to us like a ring plucked off from Christ’s finger or a bracelet from his arm; or rather like his picture from his breast; delivered to us with such words as these; ‘as oft as you look on this remember me’.”<sup>61</sup> The Lord’s Supper is more

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<sup>59</sup>Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 246.

<sup>60</sup>Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 244.

than a memento from God. Churches that have followed in the Reform tradition “hold that sacraments are no more than signs by which people pledge their faith to Christ and memorialize their redemption in Christ.”<sup>62</sup> Vander Zee suggests that this view is the most common among Protestants today. Rob Staples puts forth that nineteenth century revivalism created an environment wherein religion, formality, and tradition were devalued, as emphasis began to be placed on “dramatic, emotion-laden, will-oriented experience that resulted in a marked and sudden transformation.”<sup>63</sup> The patterns of these revivals were “institutionalized”<sup>64</sup> in Sunday worship and have been perpetuated in the modern evangelical protestant Church. Emphasis was placed on the preaching of the Word as a means of grace, and “little by little”<sup>65</sup> a movement developed away from baptism and communion as means of grace.<sup>66</sup> This movement has eroded the rich meaning of communion from transformational encounters with God to mere mechanical or perhaps memorial rites. This danger (where sacrament becomes mechanical rites only) can also certainly be true for movements that have maintained doctrinally a sacramental theology.

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<sup>61</sup>John Flavel quoted in the *Mosaic Holy Bible*, 293.

<sup>62</sup>Vander Zee, *Christ, Baptism and the Lord's Supper*, 31.

<sup>63</sup>Staples, *Outward Sign and Inward Grace*, 22-23.

<sup>64</sup>Staples, *Outward Sign and Inward Grace*, 24.

<sup>65</sup>Borgen argues that revivalism became institutionalized and lost the fundamental theology of the sacraments – He suggests that this happened “little by little”. Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments*, 24.

<sup>66</sup>Besides the subtle erosion away from the emphasis of the means of grace, two other factors that have impacted the FMCIC practice of the Eucharist are worthy of mention: circuit riders, and later on pastors who served several churches at once, made it so the Eucharist could only be served those Sundays that the ordained pastor was present; and the cross-pollination of believers from memorial theological backgrounds into FMCIC.

Furthermore, Roman Catholics and Reformers differ on the number of sacraments.<sup>67</sup> Staples explains that the Reformers have only baptism and communion because of three specific criteria. First, the Reformers accept only those rites that are clearly established by Christ in the New Testament. Secondly, the sacrament must have a physical sign or element (water, bread, wine or juice!). Thirdly, the sign must be accompanied by a biblical promise that we can respond to.<sup>68</sup>

Finally, Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Anglicans and Methodists tend toward sign *and* mystery in sacrament which is a more satisfying interpretation of the baptism and communion passages in Scripture that have been examined.

### **Sacrament of Communion: John and Charles Wesley**

John Calvin acknowledges the mystery of the “sacred Supper” as he writes “I will not be ashamed to confess that it is too high a mystery either for my mind to comprehend or my words to express.”<sup>69</sup> Calvin held a high view of communion but called the Roman Catholic position absurd on the basis of “the reality of human nature.”<sup>70</sup> However to Calvin and his subsequent followers the concept of mystery would have less significance in their understanding and practice of Communion. To John Wesley the concept of mystery in the Eucharist is still important. Wesley’s belief that sacrament was symbol and mystery is illustrated in *Eucharistic Hymns*, Hymn 166 stanza 4:

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<sup>67</sup>There are seven Roman Catholic Sacraments: Baptism, Eucharist Confirmation, Reconciliation, also called Penance, the Anointing of the Sick, Marriage and Holy Orders.

<sup>68</sup>Staples, *Outward Sign and Inward Grace*, 91-93.

<sup>69</sup>Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.17.32.

<sup>70</sup>Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.17.32.

From house to house they broke the bread  
Impregnated with life Divine  
And drank the Spirit of their Head  
Transmitted in the sacred wine.<sup>71</sup>

“Impregnated” and “drank the Spirit” each describes vividly the mysterious interaction among the believer, the elements and God. What then is a Methodist sacramental theology? John Wesley responds:

Sacraments ordained of Christ are not only badges or tokens of Christian Men’s Profession; but rather they are certain Signs of Grace, and God’s good will towards us, by which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our faith in him... The sacraments were not ordained of Christ to be gazed upon, or to be carried about; but that we should duly use them.<sup>72</sup>

The fact that Wesley did not write a formal systematic theology provides a challenge to formulating a precise Wesleyan theology.<sup>73</sup> His *Sermons*, *Notes* and *Hymns* are the standard books of Wesleyan doctrine.<sup>74</sup> Wesley was a practical theologian – a practitioner of his beliefs. He divides theology into two branches: “speculative divinity” and “practical divinity.”<sup>75</sup> Wesley was not a systematic theologian, but tended to favor practical theology; that is, whatever the discussion, in the end, it must contribute to the furtherance of the Kingdom. Wesley says it this way: “For what avails the clearest knowledge, even of the things of God, if it go no farther than speculation, if it be not

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<sup>71</sup>Ernest Rattenbury, *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley* (City Road, London: Epworth Press, 1948), 248.

<sup>72</sup>John Wesley quoted in Ole Borgen’s *John Wesley on the Sacraments*, 50.

<sup>73</sup>Matthew McEwen, “The Concept of Sacrifice in the Theology of the Eucharistic Hymns of Charles Wesley” (Toronto: ThM Thesis, Tyndale Seminary, 2007), 2.

<sup>74</sup>McEwen, *The Concept of Sacrifice in the Theology of the Eucharistic Hymns of Charles Wesley*, 2.

<sup>75</sup>Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments*, 36.

reduced to practice.”<sup>76</sup> Sacraments for Wesley were not speculative but practical. As such the sacraments were not only a religious ordinance or duty but a lifestyle choice that Christians should participate in frequently.<sup>77</sup> Wesley understood sacraments as an “outward sign of inward grace, and a means whereby we receive the same.”<sup>78</sup> To Wesley the sacraments are not meritorious in that they possess no intrinsic power; rather their value is in us remembering that God alone saves us and continues to sustain us. Adamantly he preached that “before you use any means, let it be deeply impressed on your soul; there is no power in this. It is in itself, a poor, dead, empty thing.”<sup>79</sup> These “means” (sacraments) are “ordinary channels” by which this grace can be channeled into our lives.<sup>80</sup> Once more though Wesley cautions that these external worship practices are “lost labour” and he asserts even stronger, “an utter abomination to the Lord without a heart devoted to God.”<sup>81</sup> To Wesley the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was an opportunity to encounter God – an opportunity which depended on God and the believer’s desire to experience Him. It was not merely a result of the right external actions being in place.

Although Wesley adamantly disagreed with the Catholic view of transubstantiation, he held a similar view of remembering.<sup>82</sup> Wesley maintained that the

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<sup>76</sup>Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments*, 37.

<sup>77</sup>Staples, *Outward Sign and Inward Grace*, 100.

<sup>78</sup>Wesley, *Sermon Sixteen: The Means of Grace*, II.1.

<sup>79</sup>Wesley, *Sermon Sixteen: The Means of Grace*, IV.4.

<sup>80</sup>Wesley, *Sermon Sixteen: The Means of Grace*, II.2.

<sup>81</sup>Wesley, *Sermon Sixteen: The Means of Grace*, I.4.

Lord's Supper was the believer's opportunity to "manifest your solemn remembrance of his death, til he cometh in the clouds."<sup>83</sup> Borgen explains Wesley's view:

Thus the Lord's Supper communicates the Body and Blood to men. At the same time, in the God-ward direction men present not the same sacrifice, but the same sacrifice in its consequent effects.... The believer receives the benefits of Christ's sacrifice, and because he has received Christ he is enabled to "set forth the death of the Lord" before the Father and with that himself as well. The means of grace and the Lord's Supper in particular are a means of conveying Christ's sacrifice both ways.<sup>84</sup>

To remember the body and blood is to participate in the sacrifice of Christ. The sacrifice in itself can never be repeated, but the "sacrifice expressed in the Lord's Supper is a present reality based on the historical sacrifice that continues through the ascension of Christ as the slain-lamb from the book of Revelation."<sup>85</sup> J. Rattenbury summarizes well Wesley's view of remembrance and the concern Wesley had with a mere memorial and symbolic interpretation of communion:

Undoubtedly the word [*anamnesis*] as applied to the Sacrament always recalls the historical fact of Calvary. But Jesus did not tell His disciples to remember Calvary, but to remember Him; to remember of course, 'Christ crucified', but not merely the crucifixion of Christ, but the Christ who was crucified ... The Sacrament could never mean to them a bare memorial of the dead Christ, for the simple reason that He was living – still bearing upon His hands and feet glorious scars ... The pure memorialist excludes, when he is quite consistent with his own sacramental theory – as fortunately he rarely is- the living present Christ.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>82</sup>"It is important to note that for Wesley, the term 'communion' does not connote the esoteric and ethereal conceptions of mysticism. He interprets the word in its active sense: communion actually communicates Christ and his benefits..." Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments*, 184.

<sup>83</sup>Wesley, *Sermon Sixteen: The Means of Grace*, III.11.

<sup>84</sup>Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments*, 243.

<sup>85</sup>McEwen, *The Concept of Sacrifice in the Theology of the Eucharistic Hymns of Charles Wesley*, 17.

<sup>86</sup>Rattenbury, *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley*, 21.

*Anamnesis* can be likened to an older married couple who, on their anniversary, remember to each other their first date, the first time they held hands, their first kiss, the first time they met the parents, and so on. This is not merely a cognitive memory exercise; rather, this time together engages memories and feelings and brings the couple back to another time in their lives. The analogy stops here as it is insufficient to embrace the spiritual reality embedded in *anamnesis*.

### **A Summary of the Purposes of the Lord's Supper**

A cross section of traditions have been considered: Roman Catholic, Protestant Reform, Wesleyan, etc. All share commonalities regarding sacraments today. They agree in the following ways: 1. that sacraments are essential to Church life; 2. they all share a firm resolve that Christ instituted at least baptism and communion; 3. they all believe that sacraments are symbol, although sacramentalists, including the Roman Catholic and Wesleyan thinkers, argue that, scripturally, sacraments are symbol *and* mystery as they are a “means of grace.” The grace that is experienced in communion is personal, communal and missionful. The Wesleyan understanding of the Eucharist therefore is rooted in the biblical study at the beginning of this chapter. The primary function of the sacrament of communion is to remember (*zakar* and *anamnesis*). Remembering nurtures a believer's identity; it also nurtures community, worship and mission (or faith). What vehicle or mechanism can the church employ to facilitate the activation of purposes of communion?



## The Marriage of Sacrament and Discipleship

Much is written about the sacrament of the Eucharist. The literature is ancient and modern. Interestingly, Leonard Vander Zee observes that “most books on the sacraments are written by those deeply embedded in the traditionally sacramental churches - Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran and a few Reformed. But there is a general absence of books from a more general evangelical Protestant perspective.”<sup>87</sup> Ray Noll reports that in the Roman Catholic archives he discovered that “49,236 books and articles on the sacraments [were] published in German, French, Spanish, English and Italian between 1960 and 1992.”<sup>88</sup> The evangelical community has not written 49,000 books about the sacraments, which points to an apparent disinterest in the potential of the sacraments in a believer’s faith journey. However, one need only type the word discipleship into a seminary library’s search engine to discover that the Protestant movement has been very focused on this theme. Whereas the sacraments are ecclesial in nature (i.e., they belong to the institution of church), discipleship has been understood as a step an individual takes to grow deeper in his own faith journey.

Some writers link the sacraments to community. For instance, Dietrich Bonhoeffer connects baptism, communion, and discipleship in his excellent work *The Cost of Discipleship*: “Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves ... the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship...”<sup>89</sup> Though

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<sup>87</sup>Vander Zee, *Christ, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper*, 10.

<sup>88</sup>Ray Noll, *Sacraments: A New Understanding for a New Generation* (New London, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2008), 10.

<sup>89</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, revised edition (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1949), 47.

there is an obvious connection between these sacraments and discipleship that intuitively is recognized, it is not more fully developed in his book. Another example is Robert Webber's understanding of the sacraments.<sup>90</sup> In his eight volume series, he understands sacrament in relation to worship. Again, like Bonhoeffer, sacrament is not explicitly tied to discipleship, but it is more than a service rendered to God by a Christian.

As noted above, Christ introduced the Eucharist to His *ekklesia* (His disciples), and ordained it to be a lasting institution within church. Thus Jesus married the Eucharist to discipleship, and for many good reasons. If discipleship is the basic building block of the Body of Christ, then by changing the basic building block, the whole organism / organization will be transformed. Communion could be potent information (i.e., both healthy practice of relationship and doctrine) which, once introduced into the system, could transform the whole. Communion practiced regularly would facilitate the following themes being consistently at the forefront of a believer's journey:

1. The believer remembers her identity in Christ;
2. Remembering nurtures [reconciled] community;
3. Remembering leads the believer into worship;
4. Remembering matures a believer in his faith as he considers the implications of Christ's sacrifice on his own life, which will lead to living sacrificially.

If intentional and organic relationships were developed that constantly digested and grew from these major Eucharistic themes, then clearly the *ekklesia* would experience a greater vitality in worship and her mission.

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<sup>90</sup>Webber, *The Complete Library of Christian Worship*.

In the following chapter, full time practitioners of faith were questioned about discipleship and communion. These ministers also wrestled with a practical means of applying sacramental discipleship.

CHAPTER FOUR:  
PRACTICAL DIVINITY – CONVERSATIONS ABOUT SACRAMENTAL  
DISCIPLESHIP

Dialogue is a way of knowing and should never be viewed as a mere tactic to involve students in a particular task. We have to make this point very clear... I engage in dialogue because I recognize the social and not merely the individualistic character of the process of knowing. In this sense, dialogue presents itself as an indispensable component of the process of both learning and knowing.

--Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

The final research question to be considered is how the experiences and perspectives of current practitioners provide further insight into discipleship, community development, and the sacraments. Two different methodologies are explored: 1. three theological conversations with focus groups comprised of FMCIC pastors, where discipleship, communion and then a possible synthesis of these two are discussed;<sup>1</sup> and 2. interviews with the National Leadership Team of the FMCIC about their observations of Free Methodist practice of communion and discipleship.

Since the thrust of this thesis is healthy community, collaborative inquiry is the most logical means of supporting the discussion. That is, to more clearly represent orthopraxy and formulate possible solutions the local church can take to conform to biblical descriptions of sacrament and discipleship, it seemed prudent to invite church leaders to the table. Bellous and Sheffield explain at length:

Collaborative inquiry invites us to come with unfinished, partial knowledge so that the whole group comes to an idea of what they know, believe and are called on by God to do as they reflect together. It is grounded on communal knowledge

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<sup>1</sup>Primary helps for this section include: Joyce Bellous and Dan Sheffield, *Conversations That Change Us: Learning the Art of Theological Reflection* (Toronto, Ontario: Clements Publishing, 2007); John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press, 2006); and Lewis Anthony Dexter, *Elite and Specialized Interviewing* (Colchester, UK: ECPR Press, 2006).

applied to a disturbing event that remains unresolved for the one presenting it. During the process, generative themes, blind spots and universal needs are linked to scripture.<sup>2</sup>

The focus groups were comprised of knowledgeable practitioners of faith who were able to draw from their own ministry experiences. The unresolved and disturbing idea with which the groups contended was the disconnect between what is understood as a scriptural mandate and what is the actual practice of sacrament and discipleship in local FM churches.

In addition to the collaborative theological discussion groups of pastors, a second methodology is laid out in the following pages: interviews with the National Leadership Team of the FMCIC. Interview method, rather than a focus group, was chosen to allow these leaders to describe their unique perspective of the FMCIC. Where a pastor's view is limited to her own church experiences, the NLT has the privilege of a bird's eye view of the movement. An interview, rather than group conversation, offered the individual NLT members the opportunity to present their observations.

### **Step One: Conversations With Practitioners of the Faith**

FMCIC pastors from a variety of community and church contexts dialogued on three occasions about the present state of sacrament, discipleship and community in the FMCIC (Table 4.1). These pastors discussed possible steps the movement could take to recapture Wesley's call to be a sacramental people. Group One met on two separate occasions to have theological conversations. In the first meeting the group discussed their

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<sup>2</sup>Bellous and Sheffield, *Conversations That Change Us*, 126.

current understanding and practice of sacrament. In the second meeting this same group considered discipleship: they defined it and discussed the present state of discipleship and the vitality of community in FMCIC churches. Appendix A outlines the probing questions the reflection group started with.<sup>3</sup> Having established the common practice of sacrament and discipleship within the FMCIC, a second group, also comprised of FM pastors, was invited to reflect on a possible synthesis of these two important biblical mandates.<sup>4</sup>

**Table 4.1 Focus Groups**

LEADER (L= lead pastor; A= Associate; O= Other)	Years in vocational ministry	Years in present ministry	Faith background	Average Sunday morning attendance
Andrew Suttar – L	8	2	Free Methodist (FM)	35
Matthew McEwen –L	5	4	FM	45
Mike Gibney –L	13	10	FM	40
John-Mark Cockram – A	5	3	Baptist, now FM	500
Dave & Kathy Stephenson – L	5	5	Varied, now FM	20
Joe Schaefer –L	21	13	Catholic, now FM	49
Kevin Jones – A*	6	3	Catholic, Nazarene, now FM	275
Rob Clements – O*	N/A	N/A	FM	N/A
Steve Ottley – L*	18	10	Nazarene	110
Dale Harris – L*	1	1	Varied now FM	70
Vic Stonehouse – L* (intentional interim)	43	2 weeks!	Holiness movement now FM	275
Wesley Wood – A*	2	2	Standard, now FM	110

(“\*” indicates leaders that participated in the third session)

<sup>3</sup>Sharan Merriam offers some concrete direction with regards the type of interview questions that should be used and those that should be avoided. She also offers advice about ‘discovering’ or determining the right questions. Finally Merriam outlines how to write up a report of a case study or interview. Merriam’s guidelines were helpful in formulating this chapter. Sharan Merriam, *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998).

<sup>4</sup>The first two meetings with a focus group (July and August, 2009) confirmed what the FMCIC’s National Leadership Team observed as the most prevalent definitions, attitudes, and practices towards sacrament and discipleship in the FMCIC. The second focus group was briefed about these findings and was in full agreement with the conclusions. The second group then had the opportunity to focus its attention on the synthesis of sacrament and discipleship.

### *Session One (Group One): Sacrament*

The Lord's Supper is an efficacious means "...wherein God entertains man at his own Table..."

-- Ole Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments*

The group facilitator opened the discussion with "Ok let's talk about communion in our churches." Pastor Joe Schaeffer made the first comment, "Communion seems to be a part of the furniture in church life: sometimes we notice it, sometimes it is useful, mostly though we forget that it is there." Not one pastor argued for the vitality of communion in their local church. All conceded that it was not being practiced as it could be. It had become something less than an encounter with God. Four of the five churches practiced it monthly at the end of the service. One pastor had not served communion in over three months and "no one in the congregation had asked why not." The other four pastors wondered if anyone in their own churches would notice if the Eucharist were not served regularly. Furthermore, if members noticed would it bother them for the right theological reasons? Would the membership be bothered because they missed an opportunity to encounter God or would the issue be more about a tradition that has been disrupted (i.e. the member might complain that they always have communion on the last Sunday of the month!)? Pastor Dave Stephenson felt that the reason his people would miss communion if it was not served monthly, was not theological or even spiritual. He explains, "Communion would be missed in my church for sentimental reasons - much like people missed the painting of the Last Supper we recently removed that had been hanging in the foyer since 1963. They were not missing a great work of art, because it was not great art in anyone's estimation!" There was some discussion that there is room theologically for sentimentalism in communion. The nature of ritual is that a

communicant is offered a resource or tool to help her move through all the essential components of the ritual, and this may or may not elicit feelings. That a mature believer would have fond memories of past communion experiences should be expected. Pastor Stephenson explained that the danger in this, however, is that the extent of the communicant's desire is for a familiar ritual, rather than the rich experience of remembering Christ.

There was some disagreement among the pastors as to whether or not their congregations would know and practice the Wesleyan understanding of communion. Three Wesleyan distinctives were discussed: memorial versus mystery; sacrifice; and the issue of "constant communion."<sup>5</sup> All five pastors agreed that the majority of their congregations would not know the difference between a merely memorial doctrine of communion versus doctrines of symbol and mystery. Pastor Mike Gibney commented that, "Perhaps we haven't taught enough about it, but there isn't much time in a communion service." Once again all five recognized that communion was served with liturgy at the end of the regular service. Pastor Matthew McEwen reflected that the placement of communion at the end of each service has certainly contributed to the present lackluster approach FMCIC has towards communion today: "tacked on at the end of a regular service." The practice of communion does not reflect the high view of communion FMCIC claims. Pastor John-Mark Cockram wondered if a primary issue with regards the doctrine of real presence is that most people attending a Free Methodist church do not necessarily have a Free Methodist background. The group concluded that in the two more urban churches this would be true but it would not necessarily be true in

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<sup>5</sup>See chapter two discussion about these three distinctives.



the less urban churches where the majority of the members have been participants for many years.<sup>6</sup>

There was a healthy discussion about the Wesleyan view of sacrifice in communion, and apparently some misunderstanding and complete lack of understanding about the Wesleyan stance. Schaeffer surmised, “we’re not Catholic, and we’re not Baptist – we’re somewhere in the middle... not sure completely if people know what that middle ground is?!” Pastor McEwen, who recently completed a thesis about Charles Wesley’s Eucharistic hymns, reminded the group that the Wesleyan view is that the sacrifice is complete, but the book of Revelation reminds us that the Lamb appears as one who was slain (Revelation 5:6). The point is that we participate in the sacrifice in communion – not sacrificing Christ again but “owning His work at the cross as necessary for my life today.” All the pastors agreed that this rich theology deserves fresh exploration in their own churches.

And lastly, though the Wesley brothers believed that Christians should partake of communion often in any given week, not one of these pastors practiced it weekly. Pastor Joe Schaeffer reminded the group that the only reason the practice of monthly communion began was to accommodate circuit riders who could make it to a particular charge only once a month. The practice of once a month Eucharist was, in the American frontier, a matter of logistics and convenience not of theology. Today, it continues to be an issue of logistics and convenience (according to all five pastors) not a matter of

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<sup>6</sup>At the Barrie Free Methodist Church, a leadership survey determined several years ago that of those in attendance on a Sunday morning at BFMC one-third were non-church (this would be their first church experience); one-third were from mainline denominations and would say that this is their first evangelical experience; and one-third are evangelical – only a minority of this final third were FM. Each of these people brings with them their own view of communion.

theology. The cost of communion, the helpers needed to prepare the meal, and the time required in each service are prohibitive to these churches. Pastor Schaeffer observed that churches offer theological reasons such as “doing communion often may cause it to lose its effectiveness – leading to going-through the motions”, but that these reasons are not substantiated. In the collaborative mind of this group, communion was monthly because it has traditionally been monthly and it is more convenient than weekly.

An interesting conversation ensued. Pastor Cockram wondered, “Maybe it’s monthly because we do not have a high Wesleyan view of it?” Cockram’s point was that if the predominant view in FM pews is memorialist and not a real presence understanding of communion, then it stands to reason that other symbols and memorials could more conveniently fulfill communion’s purposes. If however the church recognized the opportunity to experience more of Christ’s grace then wouldn’t FM congregants be more concerned with frequent times of communion? The other four pastors agreed that this was an interesting question worthy of further exploration.

When asked about how we prepare congregations to participate in communion, there was not agreement. Most of the leaders defaulted to the liturgy as sufficient preparation for the congregation. A couple of the pastors suggested that teaching about communion should be a part of membership classes. Pastor Gibney thought that it should be more current in the lives of the members (i.e., refresher classes, articles, regular preaching about communion). “Liturgy works for some but not necessarily for all,” so what could be added to help each individual celebrate the meal? Pastor Schaeffer stated that perhaps communion is “better caught than taught”; he was proposing that the liturgy and meal itself were sufficient to communicate the fullness of the sacrament. The other

four pastors were kind but disagreed. Pastor Stephenson said, “[communion] should be about reconciliation yet most of our churches are not reconciled communities though they practice communion – we have to teach it better.” The general feeling was that the potential, opportunity, and importance of communion to church life are significant and must be taught fully.

### *A Summary of Session One*

There was little disagreement in the discussion. The consensus was that communion has become more institutional than relational thus losing its energy. The focus group agreed that the Lord’s Table is not being practiced as it should be, but commiserated that they weren’t sure exactly what that should be. The pastors shared a common view of the Eucharist as each held a Wesleyan view. However they were not sure that their congregations had a Wesleyan understanding or even an orthodox understanding. These leaders realized the apparent need to be more intentional about communicating this essential truth to their congregations. Clearly, these pastors held a high view of communion but were not leading their churches into the rich spiritual opportunity communion affords – not because they did not want to, but that they did not know how.

## *Session Two (Group One): Discipleship*

The five pastors who were a part of the two discussion sessions agreed that discipleship was not effective in their local church.<sup>7</sup> They recognized a dissonance between what Christians understand to be discipleship (which is a right understanding) and how it is practiced (or even *if* it is practiced). Pastor Gibney summarized, “we [FMCIC] are not producing impassioned followers or disciples of Christ, though it is our primary calling. We’re producing something less...” Pastor Schaeffer agreed, “We are not producing disciples, we are producing good church people.”

There was clear consensus that teaching truth needs to be done within the context of relationships. Pastor Stephenson said that “engagement with people is the main ingredient in discipleship.” This statement was a catalyst to a fuller discussion about what engagement should like. It was agreed that it should not be limited to preaching or Sunday School teaching but that it may include these. Pastor McEwen said that engagement is “involvement in someone else’s life as a friend and brother in Christ.” These should be “nurturing friendships” where there is opportunity for Christianity to become alive in the disciple’s life. Pastor John-Mark Cockram suggested that discipleship needs to be more dangerous. He explained “By *dangerous* I mean that we need to take risks - to do something that requires faith and invite my disciple to come with me in the

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<sup>7</sup> In a 2007 survey given to fifteen FMCIC ministers at a conference (Appendix B) and in a general question sent out via email to all FMCIC pastors in November of 2009 ministers were asked for their definition of “discipleship.” The answers can be neatly separated into two categories. The first category is the desired outcome of discipleship – answers were essentially: holiness, followers, Christ-likeness (by far the most common theme), prayer, compassion for others, discovering gifts, Bible knowledge, etc. The second category can be summarized as the mechanics of discipleship – that is, the way Jesus disciplined and how Christians should disciple today. For this second category the two most common words are “teaching” and “relationship.” These two categories together do encapsulate the biblically right definition of discipleship. The issue is that *it* is not apparently happening (as we argued in chapter two). In fact in the 2007 survey 100% of the respondents said that discipleship was only “somewhat” effective in their church life (the scale was “not at all [effective] / somewhat / working well / excellent”; “somewhat” then is only better than “not at all”).

faith-risk. For example invite him to come on a mission trip that will be a financial sacrifice and a cultural stretch.” The group liked the concept and agreed that the word *dangerous* is a good adjective to qualify discipleship. It implies that whatever discipleship is, it is not status quo living. Pastor Stephenson summarized it this way, “dangerous discipleship should take a disciple outside of comfort and convenience and offer an opportunity to learn to trust God in new ways.”

Comfort and convenience were the primary reasons for the orthodoxy orthopraxy disconnect regarding discipleship. The pastors suggested that people’s schedules are so full and busy that one more thing was inconvenient and will not be entertained. Pastor McEwen stated that “as long as discipleship is understood as a program then people will resist it: who has time for another program?” Pastor Schaeffer went so far as to suggest that “one more book to read is one more thing”; thus discipleship training is resisted. This group facilitator reminded the other pastors that Jesus didn’t give anyone a book to read, but simply invited His disciples to “follow Me – let’s go for a walk for a few years!”

According to Pastor Schaeffer the church is inclined to believe that “didactic is the best method to apprentice or disciple (for example: preaching with no interaction, Sunday School, videos, books)”; however, Christ was not building apprentices but “friends” who would carry on the mission with Him—not a people Jesus would be leaving (as an apprentice is left to carry on the work) but a people God would continue to live with, in partnership. Again Pastor Stephenson summarizes, “Discipleship is friendship based.”

For a short time the group wondered if John Wesley’s primary method of discipleship, class meetings, were friendship based. It was not known, but the pastors

agreed that the structure for class meetings was less didactic and more relational: questions. Class meetings included severe, concerned, and theologically leading questions. The group did not know whether nurturing friendships came from these meetings but it agreed that these meetings with honest, concerned questions would be conducive to friendship building and serve well a post-modern culture.

The last part of the session included a conversation about a holistic approach to discipleship. Discipleship, they said, is not limited to one relationship but should include small groups, larger groups, various types of groups, and some intentional personal friendships. They agreed that the missing ingredient has been intentional personal relationships for the purpose of spiritual growth.

### *A Summary of Session Two*

The leaders were less confident in their definitions and practice of discipleship than they were about communion. Communion has a clear doctrinal statement. Discipleship is more ambiguous. The pastors identified key elements (i.e., teaching, relationship, truth, and serving) but as with communion, they were not satisfied with how discipleship was practiced in church life. The group knew that the great commission included a call to disciple but did not believe that church was fulfilling this call.

### *Session Three (Group Two): Sacramental Discipleship*

A third collaborative inquiry was required to discuss the synthesis of communion and discipleship (see table 4.2).<sup>8</sup> Once again it was an open discussion that welcomed brainstorming, and sanctified creativity. This group worked well as a team as they helped refine each other's ideas, rather than simply list their own. There was an effective synergy. The group began their time together with a conversation about discipleship.<sup>9</sup>

Pastor Dale Harris started the conversation by reminding the group that the Matthew 28:18-20 great commission was a command to Jesus' disciples to make disciples. Harris was not satisfied that the present FMCIC Base Two: Maturity class was representing the true nature of the command to make disciples. He explained that discipleship was not merely the study and practice of spiritual disciplines. At the end of the session the group agreed that spiritual disciplines were only one part of the larger process called discipleship. Rev Steve Ottley concluded that "clearly discipleship is a lifestyle – a lifelong process" that includes disciplines, programs, classes and the like, but much more. The great commission they determined was a commission to be obedient to Christ. The path of obedience then is the journey of a disciple of Christ. The focus group, having had this preliminary discussion, focused on two streams of thought: simplicity and the need to reform present church structures.

Rev. Victor Stonehouse, a well respected and effective FM minister for 43 years, introduced the idea of simplicity. He explained that church has "complicated things" when in reality the Christian journey is a call to be obedient to God and to be a servant to

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<sup>8</sup>One reason for a second group of individuals was to invite a fresh look at the discussions and findings thus far. Critical thinkers were chosen who are entrenched in the Wesleyan view of the sacraments. Their insights and observations were quite helpful in the development of this thesis.

<sup>9</sup>As per Cliff Fletcher's interview notes, August 10, 2010.

one another. “We can get caught up in the mechanics of the journey”, Stonehouse said and proceeded to quote a speaker who described scriptural exegesis as the pail one should use to draw from the living water. The problem is that instead of pouring this fresh living water into the Body life, leaders are throwing the pails too! Stonehouse’s point was received enthusiastically by the group. Harris referred to a book he was enjoying that challenged him to “delete the stuff list” in his life. He explained that the journey should be a matter of simplifying and obeying. Pastor Kevin Jones observed that the original concept of “disciple” has changed since Jesus’ time, and “something has been lost.” Rob Clement, an assistant pastor and publisher, responded that the relational component has been lost. Clements described the “boxification of the church” as the cause for the loss of the relational component of discipleship. The group interacted with this idea and it was observed that within the present structures and mentalities of the institutionalized church, discipleship needs to fit a category, a budget line, and/or a ministry area.

To summarize the first part of the conversation, intuitively the group recognized that church requires a reformation of her foundational structures and basic assumptions. Discipleship had been relegated to being a class, or program, or ministry of the church rather than how church functions. Christians have right doctrine and yet the corresponding actions do not necessarily follow. As Clements stated, “we have spiritual information but it stays in this nebulous spiritual space.” Perhaps discipleship is the means by which the spiritual information is conveyed and the vehicle through which the information is acted upon.

The conversation shifted to the sacraments; in particular the group began to discuss the primary purposes and themes of the Eucharist. They identified sacrifice,



reconciliation, the second coming, and worship. Then Pastor Wesley Wood opened the FMCIC Manual and read,

In Communion we look *in* at ourselves and confess the things that have gone wrong. We look *back* to Cavalry and praise Jesus for His death for us. We look *up* to His risen presence, longing to nourish us through the bread and cup which He said were His body and blood. We look *around* in love and fellowship with other guests at God's table. We look *forward* to His return at the end of all history, the marriage supper of the Lamb, of which every Communion is a foretaste. And we look *out* to a needy world; Communion is battle rations for Christian soldiers.<sup>10</sup>

Pastor Stonehouse highlighted the real presence opportunity that can be experienced in communion. He said that communion is “attended by an infusion of the grace of God through which we live our lives.” Constructively the group talked about the potential of communion (enjoying the infusion of grace) rather than the present ritualistic state of communion in FMCIC. Jones mentioned the richness of the Catholic approach, and bemoaned that as Protestants “we’ve jettisoned away from anything Catholic and in the process have lost – baby with the bathwater.” Jones rightfully observed that there is “great sterility in our communion ritual, whereas ancient Hebrews would offer their animal, see its blood poured out, smell it and hear it... Not at all sterile. They experienced the cost. In our practice there is no sense of what it costs me to participate in the sacrifice.” Stonehouse sees the deficiency in the current practice of communion as a result of losing “our sense of the meta-narrative of the Bible.” Again Stonehouse asserted that “communion is the ultimate summary of the meta-narrative of the Bible – or at least should be.”

This theological conversation only affirmed the conclusions of the other focus group and the observations of the NLT. Communion is sacramental and as such

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<sup>10</sup>FMCIC, *The Manual: The Free Methodist Church in Canada* (1999), 6.

communicates the story of the Bible and is an opportunity to encounter God; yet most of the pastors interviewed are not confident that the meta-story is understood and communion celebrated to its full potential. One final focus of conversation then was introduced this way: We agree that communion is more than a liturgical event on a Sunday morning – it is summary of God’s drama in mankind and a place to experience God. We also agree that discipleship should be the means of telling the story and the vehicle in which we live the story. Is it possible to bring these two ideas together? Can we marry communion to discipleship?

Interestingly the idea of eating together was mentioned at several places in the discussion. Clements argued that if the Corinthians were able to get drunk from the communion wine then they weren’t drinking from a “nice little cup.” This was a meal together, and in the past 30 years church culture seems to have moved away from families having meals together. Each group member concurred. Clements then offered that in losing meals together something spiritual was also lost. Harris said that to eat with someone in ancient times was an opportunity to identify with someone. He mentioned the significance of Jesus eating with sinners, and Peter choosing not to eat with Gentiles. Ottley believes that fellowship in church life is nurtured in corporate meal times. Jones sees the privatization of faith as a symptom of a culture that values independence and privacy as opposed to a biblical ethic of community and belonging. The more private and independent people become, the fewer meals are shared. The group agreed that the meals facilitate relationship: focused, intentional, personal, tête-à-tête relationship building. Teaching and preaching are essential to growing in Christ, but in order to communicate the drama of Scripture these are not sufficient. The group agreed that a new way of

thinking about communicating truth is necessary and the nature of the new way will be highly relational.

### *A Summary of Session Three*

The collaborative inquiry questioned the present church structures as the means of maturing the Body of Christ. These church leaders spoke of a reformation of structure. Doctrinally the FMCIC is sound, but, however sound the information, it is not manifest in a vital community of faith as described in Acts 2. Structures such as the Bases (FMCIC membership) were highlighted as requiring rethinking. Harris suggested that “sponsorship” may be a better approach, and when he was asked to clarify he said “assigning each new convert or baptismal candidate a sponsor to coach them through the sacrament and journey with them.” Stonehouse retorted, “you mean discipleship?!” A brief conversation resulted to discuss why the church chooses to use the words *sponsor*, *mentor*, *coach*, or *apprentice* rather than *disciple*. Perhaps, as Jones suggested, discipleship is “too nebulous and religious sounding - or perhaps we simply do not understand what it means?”

The conversation about eating together was moving in the direction of understanding Christ’s model of discipleship and the genius of the Eucharist. In chapter three the Eucharist was described as Christ’s genius wherein life’s most apparent basic need (eating) is the pathway to understanding life’s truest need (God) and then it was concluded that eating then necessitates our involvement with others and becomes the means of creating community.<sup>11</sup> As noted in chapter two, it is necessary to contend with

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<sup>11</sup>Chapter three, 72.

basic cultural assumptions in order to transform a community. Eating is a basic cultural experience, and in eating the New Covenant's Meal (the Eucharist) a new basic assumption is introduced into community. The believer's opportunity in the Eucharist is to eat and experience a new culture – that of the Kingdom. The international evangelistic ministry of Alpha has used the opportunity of a communal meal to connect with people and invite individuals into the faith community. Jesus explained in Revelation 3:20 that if only people would invite Him, He would “come in and eat” with them. Metaphorically, the meal was the opportunity to intentionally and organically connect with another person in order to offer them the Kingdom of God. These pastors were recognizing how natural and potent discipleship and the Eucharist could be joined together.

### **Step Two: Conversations with NLT**

A healthy church does whatever it takes to continually place the Gospel (mission) within reach of those around them, resulting in a worshipping community (transformation) of Jesus followers (discipleship) who do whatever it takes to continually place the Gospel (mission) within reach of those around them, resulting in a worshipping community (transformation) of Jesus followers (discipleship) who do whatever it takes to continually...

--FMCIC January 2010

The NLT of the FMCIC is comprised of the Bishop, Keith Elford; the Director of Personnel, Rev. Kim Henderson; the Director of Growth Ministries (Church development trends and innovations, church planting, etc.), Rev. Jared Siebert; the Director of Intercultural and Global Ministries, Rev. Dan Sheffield; and a Director of Administrative Services (who was not interviewed for this thesis). Below is a synthesis of their responses to five guiding questions. In the preceding report of the three group sessions, a summary

was given for each of the sessions; in the following section however, summary statements and observations are made for each question.

*1. Define discipleship and the desired outcomes of discipleship a church should have.*

The four respondents are Godly creative thinkers, and each quite thoughtful. Each shared the same fundamental definition of discipleship as the five pastors. Bishop Elford summarized, “discipleship is helping people walk like Jesus walked – 1John 2:6.”<sup>12</sup> However, how each of these four leaders articulated their answers is worthy of reporting here.

Bishop Elford described the preferred outcomes as first growing healthy spiritually (with a deeper grasp of what faith means in our lives), emotionally, and relationally (reconciliation, affirmation of others, less co-dependence, etc.). Secondly discipleship should lead to an individual grasping the “essentials of the faith.” And thirdly, one should understand their place in Kingdom work – their part in the mission of God.

Dan Sheffield described discipleship as “being and acting my life in a way that reflects my Master.”<sup>13</sup> Towards this end a disciple will learn to “talk with God (prayer), listen to God (His Word), and connect with believers (community).” Kim Henderson made similar comments but added that “there is a disconnect between what we are learning and what we are doing... discipleship can not be only academic.”<sup>14</sup> Jared Siebert

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<sup>12</sup>Bishop Keith Elford, as per interview with Cliff Fletcher, January 27, 2010.

<sup>13</sup>Dan Sheffield, as per interview with Cliff Fletcher, January 27, 2010.

<sup>14</sup>Kim Henderson, as per interview with Cliff Fletcher, January 28, 2010.

in his response referred to a teaching tool that he has used successfully across Canada in helping a local church consider her mission. Discipleship is “taking dead folks and helping them come alive; adopting them into the family; making them royalty; employing them in the family business which is to take dead folks and help them come alive...”<sup>15</sup>

## *2. Is this going on in FMCIC (discipleship? desired outcomes?)?*

Their answer (singular because it was unanimous) reflects what the five pastors conceded in their sessions: negative. The NLT’s responses were: “in some places – but not in most,”<sup>16</sup> “very limited,”<sup>17</sup> “in pockets,”<sup>18</sup> “absolutely not!”<sup>19</sup>

These four leaders were then asked why discipleship is not happening as it could in FMCIC. Sheffield observed that those who “want to follow God are finding opportunities to be discipled by hook or by crook – but not in our churches. Few pastors recognize themselves as disciple-makers.” Henderson referred to “old traps” that plague the church: “fears, busy-ness (I already have so much good going on).” She said further that the Free Methodist culture has been such that “our core people have been committed to death, required to come to every service every time the doors are open and they are reacting to this type of commitment. But also the commitment has been traditionally so inward focused that evangelism and discipleship have not been how they have practiced their Christian journey.” Siebert echoed Henderson’s assessment about the established FM

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<sup>15</sup> Jared Siebert, as per interview with Cliff Fletcher, January 28, 2010.

<sup>16</sup> Bishop Keith Elford, 2010.

<sup>17</sup> Kim Henderson, 2010.

<sup>18</sup> Dan Sheffield, 2010.

<sup>19</sup> Jared Siebert, 2010.

church and reflected on the newer church plants (which represent approximately one-quarter of the FM churches in Canada today – that is, churches planted in the past 15 years): “Our plants have majored on evangelism and are flexible agencies, wherein new converts will hear, ‘come to Jesus, make yourself at home, put your feet up on the coffee table...’ which then makes it harder to tell them ‘later’ that they have to take up their cross and follow Jesus!” Siebert described a “crisis of discipleship” in the broader church where everyone is asking and/or evaluating discipleship in their ministries proper. Siebert referred to Bill Hybels’ Willowcreek Church where they conducted a self-evaluation and discovered that their effectiveness in discipleship was “weak to none”. Again Siebert said that the desired outcome of discipleship is that these new family members learn they are royalty and become employed in the family business to find dead people and offer them opportunity to come alive...

Henderson offered a final thought that our present culture is not conducive to discipleship: “we are private, time is limited, trust is not extended easily... and discipleship requires these things.” If this observation is true and Sheffield’s comment that pastors do not see themselves as disciple-makers is true, then it is no wonder that discipleship is the church’s greatest sin of omission.<sup>20</sup>

*3. and 4. Do you believe communion is practiced well in FMCIC? Do we have desired outcomes in mind as we take communion? What are these?*

It became apparent in the interviews that it was difficult to have the conversation when questions 4 and 5 were separated – it was clear that these two questions had to be

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<sup>20</sup>Dallas Willard, *The Great Sin of Omission: Reclaiming Jesus’ Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (San Francisco: Harper, 2006).

asked as one question. Furthermore, although these four leaders are not presently pastoring, their observations about communion are confirmed by the discussion group's assessment of the state of communion. Bishop Keith recognized that for the most part in FMCIC, communion is "added on to the end of the service," and "those pastors that are thinking through communion in the life of their church are enjoying rich benefits." Otherwise, all observed that the regular worship service is shortened on communion Sundays, that there may or may not be reference to communion during the sermon, and that liturgy is moved through at the end of the service. Generally it is celebrated once per month, although Henderson is not comfortable that "celebrate" is an accurate description of the congregation's response. Siebert sees a tension between "somber ritual" and "beautiful mundane" (eating a meal together as a family with our Father). Henderson alluded to a similar tension between the "dire, somber approach to the Eucharist (after all we are remembering the cross) and celebration (after all we are remembering His resurrection!)." She did not feel that most FM churches in Canada were celebrating and enjoying the rich opportunities that communion presents to church life: reconciliation, self-examination, celebration.

Sheffield describes the desired outcome of communion as a "meeting with God and consequently an opportunity for personal reflection." He said further, "communion should be God leading mysteriously down a God-path... sometimes this is a profound experience and sometimes it is a matter of duty" (that is the nature of ritual – sometimes we engage and other times the ritual engages us whether we want to or not). Bishop Elford is concerned that the FMCIC remembers that their belief is that the "real presence of the Holy Spirit" is present in communion and those at The Table should anticipate God



stirring in His people, healing, giving gifts, etc. And because a believer is at God's Table that should elicit thanksgiving and praise. All four alluded to the theme and centrality of remembering in the communion experience.

*5. What do you think about a FMCIC discipleship resource - what could that look like?*

Siebert and Sheffield are presently developing a discipleship resource with an "educational approach that is constructivist, guided discovery". Presently, several churches are working with the material as a field test. The resource is highly interactive, relational and still comprehensive in theological scope. It is primarily designed to be used in a group setting.

### **A Synthesis of Ideas**

Bishop Keith Elford provided Figures 1.2 and 1.3 which graphs the attendance trend and commitments for the past decade. These graphs represent the actual statistics collected from FMCIC annual reports. Note the consistent decline in both attendance and the number of people making first time decisions to journey with Christ.<sup>21</sup> Bishop Elford introduced the graphs as alarming, but also an opportunity for the movement to strategically review her present ministry plan. Interestingly one of the NLT's six key initiatives being studied to improve the spiritual condition of FMCIC, is a focus on

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<sup>21</sup> There was an interesting discussion at the August 2010 meeting of Free Methodist Church in Canada Network Leader's meeting that questioned if the drop in commitments was a result of a cultural definition of commitments? For instance, ten years ago were more pastors regularly inviting altar calls, or having "every head bowed and every eye closed... put up your hand"? It was agreed that there has been a movement away from Sunday morning altar calls; the leaders chose to allow the statistical information to be a healthy wake up call to reconsider the denomination's present evangelistic zeal.

discipleship. There is agreement among the pastors and leaders regarding the present and desired states of discipleship and communion in FMCIC.<sup>22</sup> The following are the major themes that surfaced.

Discipleship is clearly a primary function of church, yet the pastors and NLT agreed that the FMCIC is not producing impassioned effective disciples. Intuitively the church knows what the desired outcome of discipleship is, Christ-likeness. There is, however, dissonance between what is desired and what is actually happening. Why? Pastors do not see themselves as disciple makers, the church has been operating with an ethos that has not been relationally driven, and is individualistic – whereas Christ’s idea is for Christianity to be lived within the context of community. Culture (private, busyness, etc.) also hinders the development of Christ-like discipleship.

Interestingly the general health of the FMCIC is described much like the state of discipleship: there is a desired health and a corporate understanding of what that may look like, but in reality churches are not enjoying that perceived or desired health. It is not coincidental that the church’s overall health is reflected in the health of discipleship. Reforming or even rediscovering discipleship will lead to better overall health.

No one definition emerged as the single comprehensive definition of discipleship but the key components were: relational, non-program (“organic,” “not one more thing!”<sup>23</sup>), growing in Christ (which involves celebrating Him, and participating in His mission). These findings affirm the working definition of discipleship in this document:

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<sup>22</sup> A personal note about the interview and collaborative inquiry process: Interviewing my colleagues and friends, and facilitating (and not participating) in the group sessions was a difficult exercise. I am a practitioner of ministry and obviously have some opinions, insights, and issues that I wanted to contribute to the discussion. It was also difficult to try to remain neutral and record what was being said as opposed to what I was listening for.

<sup>23</sup> Siebert, 2010.

Discipleship is an intentional and organic process of formation through loving relationships marked by accountability, commitment, education, and encouragement to serve. Discipleship is lived within the context of church family. The primary purposes of discipleship are to help nurture vital Christian community, to foster proper worship of God and to help believers participate in His mission (worship-mission).

This is not only a definition but also a strategy to create church health. It would seem that communion, since it is not just a single event in the church monthly calendar but is meant to contribute to the Christian lifestyle and ethic, could be integral to this strategy.

Communion, it was agreed, is not being practiced as it should. The Eucharist offers the believer the opportunity to *remember* sacrifice, to do the work of self-examination, to participate in reconciliation, to declare and resolve to be full participants in the mission of God. But currently, communion is relegated to the end of a regular service and the focus is reflecting on the symbol rather than the experience of a personal encounter. It is seldom taught or practiced relationally but remains in form, institutional. It is not practiced as a family meal (“beautifully mundane”<sup>24</sup>) where participants know each other’s names, are aware of the family dynamic, and have a healthy understanding of the tension between the somber nature of communion (“after all, we are remembering the cross”) and celebration (“after all, we are remembering His resurrection!”<sup>25</sup>). Consider Table 4.2:

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<sup>24</sup> Siebert, 2010.

<sup>25</sup> Henderson. 2010.

**Table 4.2 Desired Outcomes & Purposes**

<u>Desired Outcomes of discipleship</u>	<u>Vs</u>	<u>Biblical Purposes of Communion</u>
“Knowledge” <sup>26</sup> of God.....		“Remembering” Jesus’ work
Self-Awareness .....		Self-examination
Worshipper .....		Worship / celebration
Missionary .....		A fresh declaration of our mission
Loving the family of God .....		Reconciliation and family meal

Although the groups did not naturally connect communion to discipleship, the desired outcomes of discipleship that surfaced in the conversations and the purposes of communion are clearly linked. Therefore connecting this sacrament to discipleship is an opportunity to impact positively on church health. Therein is the topic of the final chapter.

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<sup>26</sup>“Knowledge” here is doctrinal knowledge and personal experience or knowledge of God.

## CHAPTER FIVE:

### FINAL SUMMARY AND SYNTHESIS

Non-discipleship is the elephant in the Church.

--Dallas Willard

This chapter summarizes findings, learning process and briefly discusses the power of a collaborative research project (i.e., what and how the network of pastors learned). Further consideration is given to the development of a principled approach to sacramental discipleship, one that takes into account active learning, the great commission to make disciples, and the practical and profound nature of the Eucharist. The benefit of this exploration to the FMCIC is a richer theology of the potential of the sacraments in developing health, thus becoming worshipful and missional. But FMCIC also will learn from the council of the wise – a network of churches wrestling theologically and introducing reform.

### **A Brief Review**

Reform is necessary in the FMCIC as attendance and conversion statistics have been in decline for the past ten years. Anecdotally, pastors and leaders have expressed concern about the disparity between the church described in Acts 2 and their own local churches (chapter 4 of this project). Perhaps a pathway to reformation is in rediscovering essential Methodist practices: discipleship and the Eucharist.

In chapter one, Edgar Schein and Walter Wink offered insights into organizational transformation. Schein described the process as being first a discovery of the culture (i.e. its basic assumptions, values, language, traditions, and symbols). Change is

accomplished by confronting or appreciating the organization's culture, and then skillfully working at transforming these basic assumptions. Wink reminds the church that besides skillfulness and awareness of the visible and invisible dynamics of an institution or culture, spiritual warfare is necessary to confront the evil forces at work in "rulers, authorities, and powers of this dark world".<sup>1</sup> The basic assumptions of the FMCIC are safeguarded in individual lives, which means that change will require relationships. Discipleship is an intentional and organic process of formation through loving relationships marked by accountability, commitment, education, and encouragement to serve. Discipleship is lived within the context of church family. The primary purposes of discipleship include: to help nurture vital Christian community; to foster proper worship of God; and to help believers participate in His mission (worship-mission). It is within these discipleship relationships that basic assumptions can be examined and when necessary changed. The desired change is a vital faith in Jesus Christ and Christlikeness, which will be evident in a local church's ministry to one another, their mission-mindedness and worship (Acts 2:41-47).

The sacrament of the Eucharist offers a believer at least five opportunities to grow towards a vital faith: to encounter Christ (the Lord's Table is a means of grace); to remember her own identity in Christ; to remember the call to live in community; remembering Christ will nurture worship; remembering inspires a believer into a deeper faith (mission). Early Methodism encouraged constant communion opportunities and adherents were taught in class meetings which were a culturally relevant method of discipleship. Discipleship is then the channel through which the themes of communion can be communicated into a believer's life. The opportunity of the FMCIC today is that

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<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 6:12.

its churches already have a high view of both discipleship and the Lord's Supper, which makes this a readily accessible model to introduce. So then if class meetings were an effective method of discipleship from the mid eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, because it was contextualized, what is contextualized discipleship today?

### **Collaborative Inquiry & Interviews: An Observation & Suggestion**

The big difference between personal and collaborative inquiry is personal inquiry aims to solve a problem; collaborative inquiry aims to find a problem that is unfinished, unsolved and confusing.

--Joyce Bellous and Dan Sheffield, *Conversations that Change Us*

Paulo Freire wrote to educators that "they must abandon the educational goal of deposit-making and replace it with the posing of the problems of human beings in their relations with the world."<sup>2</sup> Though he was not writing to the Christian church, certainly the sentiment is just as relevant: disciplers are not merely to be depositors of truth. In a post-modern society where interaction is more valued than mere deposits of truth, the NLT of the FMCIC agreed that the educational approach the denomination would pursue is "constructivist, guided discovery."<sup>3</sup> This adult learning approach facilitates cultural relevance and maintains doctrinal integrity. This style of learning is in keeping with a Wesleyan approach: John Wesley promoted social interaction as the way to holiness.<sup>4</sup> D. Michael Henderson views Wesley's innovations (i.e. class meetings, bands, etc) in group

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<sup>2</sup>Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed: 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition* (New York: Continuum, 2005), 79.

<sup>3</sup>Dan Sheffield's explanation of the learning approach, from the discussion in chapter four.

<sup>4</sup>D. Michael Henderson, *A Model for Making Disciples: John Wesley's Class Meetings* (Indiana: Francis Asbury Press, 1997), 86.

processes as a “new turn in religious history, not so much because he introduced new content, but because his methods forced a new orientation in religious knowledge.”<sup>5</sup>

David Pratt however, cautions adult educators against adopting only one “view of learning.”<sup>6</sup> Specifically he observed that there is a movement to adopt a “one size fits all notion of good teaching” and the new orthodoxy seems to be a “constructivist view of learning.”<sup>7</sup> Pratt’s approach is that one particular model should not replace another teaching method, but it should contribute to the conversation. New perspectives and other perspectives should help educators “thoughtfully revisit assumptions and beliefs they hold regarding learning, knowledge, and teaching.”<sup>8</sup> Interestingly to develop his argument Pratt offers five perspectives on teaching which should be mentioned briefly here.<sup>9</sup> First Pratt describes a transmission perspective where the teacher has mastery over the content and is responsible to deposit the content into the student. Already we have argued that depositing-truth is not a sufficient approach to discipleship, though clearly it is an element of discipleship. Next there is the developmental perspective. The aforementioned constructivist orientation to learning is “the foundation for this perspective of teaching.”<sup>10</sup> Thirdly Pratt lists an apprenticeship perspective (which is a popular understanding of Christian discipleship). The strength of this perspective is that the learner is “practicing” the new skills. Apprenticeship is “reenculturating [a learner]

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<sup>5</sup>Henderson, *A Model for Making Disciples*, 104.

<sup>6</sup>David Pratt, “Good Teaching: One Size Fits All?” in *Contemporary Viewpoints on Teaching Adults Effectively*, no. 93, ed., Jovita M. Ross-Gordon (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 5.

<sup>7</sup>Pratt “Good Teaching: One Size Fits All?”, 5.

<sup>8</sup>Pratt “Good Teaching: One Size Fits All?”, 14.

<sup>9</sup> Pratt “Good Teaching: One Size Fits All?”, 6-13.

<sup>10</sup>Pratt “Good Teaching: One Size Fits All?”, 8.



into a new community of practice and way of thinking”.<sup>11</sup> Once again however this is not the full understanding of discipleship as Christ modeled. The emphasis is on training in order to learn and fulfill a task. This does not necessarily appreciate the complexity of human experience (passions, pasts, sin) and limits the Christian journey to learning a task. The fourth, the nurturing perspective, is clearly more relationally driven. It is heart focused, and the learner’s story is quite important to the teacher or counselor. The most comparable model, however, to Christian discipleship as this paper has defined it, is the social reform perspective. Like discipleship it is “difficult to describe because it has no single, uniform characteristic or set of strategies.”<sup>12</sup> Pratt explains at length:

At first glance, effective social reform teachers have much in common with other effective teachers. They are clear and organized in their delivery of content, bring learners into diverse communities of practice, ask probing questions and use powerful metaphors that help learners bridge between prior knowledge and new concepts, and work hard to respect and promote the dignity and self-efficacy of their learners... Social reform teachers make three assumptions: that their ideals are necessary for a better society, that their ideals are appropriate for all, and that the ultimate goal of teaching is to bring about social change, not simply individual learning... [Social reform teachers] are known among their colleagues and students as advocates for the changes they wish to bring about in society.<sup>13</sup>

Pratt’s observations lend themselves well to the present exploration of sacramental discipleship. Clearly all the other four perspectives above are important to church life. However, the last perspective supports the working definition of discipleship and the practice of discipleship that will be outlined in this chapter. Consider Pratt’s description of social reform teaching perspective against the working definition of discipleship in Table 5.1 below.

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<sup>11</sup>Pratt “Good Teaching: One Size Fits All?”, 10.

<sup>12</sup>Pratt “Good Teaching: One Size Fits All?”, 12.

<sup>13</sup>Pratt “Good Teaching: One Size Fits All?”, 12-13.

**Table 5.1 Discipleship and Pratt**

<u>Working Definition of Discipleship</u>	<u>Pratt's Social Reform Perspective</u>
<p><b>Discipleship is an intentional</b></p> <p><b>and organic process of formation</b></p> <p><b>that will be defined by a loving relationship</b></p> <p><b>marked by accountability, commitment, education, and encouragement to serve. This relationship is lived within the context of church family</b></p> <p><b>The primary purposes of discipleship are to nurture vital Christian community, to worship God and participate in His mission</b></p>	<p>Pratt explains how the teacher is "clear and organized in their delivery of content" thus clearly has an agenda, a system or strategy</p> <p>Pratt sees the social reform teacher as not limiting teaching to individual learning, but of practical application that invites the student into the learning experience by bringing "learners into diverse communities or practice"</p> <p>"loving relationships" are nurtured with "ask probing questions and use powerful metaphors" as they take into account and respects the person's story</p> <p>Pratt does not use the word community, but certainly a healthy Christian community will be a 'place' where each person is working "hard to respect and promote the dignity and self-efficacy of their learners". This mirrors the Biblical tension of growing individually as a follower of Christ and the need to be a part of the Body in order to be the individual Christ has called you to be</p> <p>Pratt clearly states that reform is the goal of this perspective: "the ultimate goal of teaching is to bring about social change"</p>

Christ's method (or lifestyle) is much more recognizable in this approach than in our present discipleship through pulpit ministry, programs, or twelve part classes. Pratt's contribution to the discussion is helpful in that he precludes the necessity in adult learning to listen to the learner, ask probing questions as necessary to developing reform. Dallas Willard agrees as he explains that the marks of a disciple should be "observation, study, obedience and imitation."<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup>Willard, *The Great Omission*, 6.

To observe study, obey, and imitate Christ is to be incarnational in our community. The NLT and the pastors discussed culture – the NLT are students of Canadian culture and church culture, and it was clear in these separate interviews that they were studying together. They each alluded to post-modernity, the FM ethos, and the need for a new paradigm and a corresponding resource to develop healthy churches in Canada. The pastors were not students as much as they were workers or practitioners. They were more inclined to talk about what they do and how it should be done. They did not speak of paradigm shifts or transforming a culture. They wondered how to disciple better and introduce communion next Sunday. The sessions with the pastors were about solving the dissonance between what should be and what really is happening. The conversations with the NLT included more questions: “How could technology help?”; “How do we help leaders think as disciplemakers?”; “If we were ever healthy as a movement, when did things change and why?”<sup>15</sup> It would have been interesting to have NLT members participating in the pastor sessions. And perhaps a constructive first step towards health as a movement is for the NLT to help the practitioners learn to think critically and to help pastors understand themselves as learners. Senge’s view is that the most effective and productive organizations will be learning organizations. FMCIC would be well served in helping practitioners become learners – not only through personal study and conferences about church growth, but also through exposure to new forms of learning styles (relevant to our culture) and culturally sensitive resources.

Pastors are discipling, but in the same ways they were disciplined: through pulpit ministry, meetings, classes, all with a sense that discipleship, as Joe Schaefer quipped, is

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<sup>15</sup>Bishop Keith Elford, Kim Henderson and Jared Siebert respectively, as per interviews conducted for this project.

“caught not taught.” All agreed that whatever discipleship has been it is not what Christ did or has in mind for the church today. NLT and pastors agreed that discipleship should be relationally driven, and any resources that involve questions, listening, discussion, small numbers of people, and regular times together will develop friendships not just right doctrine.

### **Collaborative Inquiry and Interviews: An Idea**

Disciple makers interact, befriend, listen, and dialogue so to be culturally relevant while remaining doctrinally pure.<sup>16</sup> Barret and her research team cited a very interesting observation:

As a result of Bible study there has been movement among people away from giving definitive answers to asking and dwelling in the questions, such as “what does God really want of us as a church?”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Conversation is the basis of cultural development – at least this is the main idea in The World Café movement. Through conversation, ideas are grown, leading to cross pollination, sharpening and refining of the ideas. One pioneer in the movement goes so far as to say that conversation is humanity’s “medium for survival.” The process involved in the World Café is collaborative dialogue where a question is asked and the participants talk with each other. Anecdotally, the Barrie Free Methodist Church experimented with the process on a Sunday morning. Leadership wrongly assumed that once the exercise was announced on that particular Sunday morning that only a small portion would participate (the leadership used the theological term ‘the remnant’!). It was announced that the congregation would break into small groups of approximately eight, answer a question, and after seven minutes break into new groups and answer the same question. This would happen three times – that is, each participant would participate in three 7 minute groups. Where the leadership assumed 150 people would remain, well over 300 participated and the feedback was unanimously positive. The single question was “what are the needs you see in Barrie?” Four major themes surfaced and the leadership team has since begun to develop strategy to minister to these needs. The World Café tool facilitated conversation and created a new energy as people’s ideas are reflected in the major themes. Participants mentioned en masse how they felt like they were being listened to. Recorders in each group reflected that participants told stories, sometimes their own stories, in helping the group understand their idea. Story telling is very important in relationship building and the World Café exercise afforded this opportunity. In the end, conversation led to individuals expressing ownership of a ministry plan, to individuals being heard, to a greater sense of community (as one new person to BFMC exclaimed). At a macro-level conversation impacted the BFMC community. So it would seem that it would not be a leap in logic to expect that many on-going conversations (conversations with two or three participants) whose purposes were to help individuals grow in their faith, would contribute to transformation – a community that worships and is about the missio Dei. Juanita Brown and David Isaacs, *The World Café: Shaping our Futures Through Conversations that Matter* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2005), 17.

Learning was occurring in missional churches by dwelling in the questions. The researchers observed the prevailing culture's learning style - questions, conversation, story, relationships - and they intuitively connected this approach to learning to their "Pattern 2 Biblical Formation and Discipleship"<sup>18</sup> (though the researchers did not make the connection between this observable pattern and the prevailing culture). According to the researchers, dwelling in the questions as a community was facilitating friendship building in discipleship and the nurturing of right theology.

Perhaps then a creative tool that would take into account generation sensitivities,<sup>19</sup> relationship, and discipling would be a series of leading questions, that is, questions that have an agenda. The agenda is to listen (so to nurture a friendship), and help the disciple's story interact with God's story – that is to say, the agenda is friendship and theology.<sup>20</sup> But more should be mined here regarding questions and listening. John Wesley methodically created a system of class meetings that included severe, concerned, and biblically principled questions. Jesus asked questions that opened opportunities for individuals to have their lifestyles filtered through Scripture. Consider these Jesus-questions: will you give Me a drink (John 4:7)? Who do people say that I am (Luke 9:18)? Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not (Matthew 12:10)? What is written in the

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<sup>17</sup>Lois Y. Barrett, ed., *Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns in Missional Faithfulness* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 63-64.

<sup>18</sup>Barrett, ed., *Treasure in Clay Jars*, 64.

<sup>19</sup>Much is written about post-modernity, but two helpful resources describe the highly relational nature of the post-modern community: an article by Wycliffe College Institute of Evangelism, "The Church in a Postmodern Age: Ten Things You Need to Know", vol. 3, no. 4, 1996; and Graham Johnston, *Preaching to a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001).

<sup>20</sup>Story telling or articulating one's "autobiography can be a powerful technique for unearthing assumptions." Asking questions is a means of facilitating someone telling their own story – necessary for relationship building and Kingdom transformation. Patricia Cranton, "Teaching for Transformation" in *Contemporary Viewpoints on Teaching Adults Effectively*, no.93, ed., Jovita M. Ross-Gordon (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 67.

Law? How do you read it (Luke 10:26)? Who touched Me (Luke 8:45)? Each of these questions led into theologically rich conversations where someone walks away from Christ's leading question challenged to life change. Good questions could serve the purposes of discipleship. Lois Zachary teaches about adult education that an effective mentor (or discipler) will "ask questions, reformulate statements, summarize, listen for the silence, listen reflectively, and provide consistent feedback in order to stimulate learning."<sup>21</sup> Transformation or reformation can certainly happen in a variety of ways, after all God is not limited to one means or method. But often transformation is "an incremental process in which we gradually change bits of how we see things, not even realizing a transformation has taken place until afterward."<sup>22</sup> Patricia Cranton expands her thought about incremental transformation by explaining that "critical reflection is the means by which we work through *beliefs and assumptions*, assessing their validity in the light of new experiences or knowledge, considering their sources, and examining underlying premises."<sup>23</sup> Critical reflection happens in the context of conversation and relationship according to Cranton. Already we have discussed this premise, that basic assumptions are necessarily confronted in relationships, basic life structures. Here critical reflection and questions are added to the transformation mechanism as these contribute to nurturing discipleship relationships. Again Cranton in closing her article, talks about teaching for transformation: "to ask the right challenging question at the right moment is the most important thing we can do."<sup>24</sup> Basic assumptions are deeply embedded. Cranton

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<sup>21</sup>Lois Zachary, "The Role of Teacher as Mentor" in *Contemporary Viewpoints on Teaching Adults Effectively*, no.93, ed., Jovita M. Ross-Gordon (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 29.

<sup>22</sup>Cranton, "Teaching for Transformation", 65. [*italics mine*].

<sup>23</sup>Cranton, "Teaching for Transformation", 65.

reasserts that “our assumptions are deeply embedded in our childhood, community, and culture... [and] critical questioning can be helpful” in helping an individual become aware of these.<sup>25</sup> Sheffield concurs as he explains that “we will never have a chance to see truth or falsehood in our assumptions until we can name them and freely discuss them”.<sup>26</sup> Questions and critical reflection therefore are helpful tools in developing discipleship.<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore, questions that help people appreciate and engage in communion are the most helpful questions to this end. Questions and then the act of communion together as a life rhythm is the essential idea in sacramental discipleship. It could include probing and leading questions about baptism and, depending on the local church’s doctrinal stance, other sacraments. Because communion is generally accepted in Christendom, discipleship which resembles a social reform teaching perspective, whose central theme is related to the Eucharist, becomes a potent church health tool. Formulaically consider the following argument:

**If** Healthy Doctrine of Trinity → Healthy Ecclesiology → Effective Worship-Mission,

And **if** Healthy Ecclesiology occurs when unhealthy basic assumptions are contended with in discipleship relationships,

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<sup>24</sup>Cranton, “Teaching for Transformation”, 71.

<sup>25</sup>Cranton, “Teaching for Transformation”, 67.

<sup>26</sup>Dan Sheffield presentation at FMCIC Minister’s Conference, October 6, 2010.

<sup>27</sup>Jane Vella offers a list of insightful axioms about dialogue: “Don’t tell what you can ask; don’t ask if you know the answer, tell, in dialogue... What is needed for effective teaching is – in this order – time, time, and time. A learning task is a task for the learner!” These axioms contribute to the argument that teaching should be relational, and conversation, critical reflection, questions, and listening are essential components of developing relationships and nurturing transformation. Jane Vella, “Quantum Learning: Teaching as Dialogue” in *Contemporary Viewpoints on Teaching Adults Effectively*, *Contemporary Viewpoints on Teaching Adults Effectively*, no.93, ed., Jovita M. Ross-Gordon (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 76.

And **if**, the healthy understanding and practice of communion can lead to worship-mission,

**Then** communion practiced in the context of a discipling community is a pathway to ecclesial reformation for the FMCIC.

### **Sacramental Discipleship: A Model**

#### *Assumptions*

- a) FMCIC leaders and pastors adhere to the Wesleyan view of the Eucharist.
- b) FMCIC leaders and pastors develop and own a corporate definition of discipleship [similar to the one presented in this exploration].
- c) The following model relies on the present FMCIC Pastoral Network structure, where each pastor is assigned to a network of pastors that are required to meet for six days each year for accountability, training and support.

#### *The Plan*

- 1. At a network meeting FMCIC leaders and pastors are: i) reminded of the Wesleyan view of sacrament (and introduced to the five purposes of communion); ii) introduced to the definition of discipleship; and iii) trained in facilitating a conversation group.
- 2. At the same meeting these leaders will learn to use these two in tandem: the Eucharist and discipleship. Practice sessions (role playing) with a discipler and disciple will be encouraged at the network meeting. The nature of the exercise is for the pastors to discuss and evaluate the potential of conversation based discipleship.



3. Local pastors then will be encouraged to begin to challenge all board members, staff and other leaders in their local church to enter into discipleship relationships with communion themes (questions) as the basis of each discussion.
4. Subsequent Network meetings will be opportunities to assess progress and keep pastors accountable to the commitment. Regularly scheduled leadership meetings in the local church will also be check in times.
5. One year from launch, a local church leadership meeting will be designated to debrief the effectiveness of the sacramental discipleship process. The **measures of success / effectiveness** will be conversations about each of the themes and their practice in the local church. For example, an evaluative conversation will ask about the theme of mission: “Are the two people I am discipling aware of their spiritual gifts today and have begun to practice them because I challenged them to?”

#### **Four Requirements for a Discipler**

A mature believer should be equipped with leading questions that will categorically consider these five major communion themes. The discipler should ask and listen to the responses to these questions. The discipler will then help her friend come to a doctrinally true, emotionally healthy, or missionally constructive response. If it is to learn to pray then the discipler’s job is to get down on her knees and pray with her friend. If it is to learn faith, then the discipler will bring his friend to a faith growing opportunity (i.e., a mission trip). If God has shown the friend that forgiveness needs to be extended to

someone in her past then the discipler is to help facilitate that event – even going with the friend to forgive. The nature of discipleship is that it should be defined by a loving relationship marked by accountability, commitment, education, and encouragement to serve, which implies mutual commitment and servanthood: disciple and disciplee. The discipler is teacher, counselor, guide and fellow journeyman. Zachary explains,

mentoring practice has shifted from a product-oriented model, characterized by transfer of knowledge, to a process-oriented relationship involving knowledge acquisition, application and critical reflection... mentoring is best described as a reciprocal and collaborative learning relationship between two or more individuals who share mutual responsibility and accountability for helping a mentee work toward achieving clear and mutually defined learning goals.<sup>28</sup>

The concept of mentorship in this case is easily transferable to the concept of discipleship. Zachary's insights are constructive to our discussion as she observes a cultural (perhaps post modern) shift away from one form of learning to a more relational model for adult education. She also observes that this relationship should be reciprocal. John Wesley also believed in a relationally driven discipleship method as he "modeled a collaborative style of directing and decision making."<sup>29</sup> Certainly Christ concurs. As we have seen the culturally relevant and hermeneutically satisfying model of discipleship to follow is not merely didactic but hands on, relational, incarnational. Furthermore, a discipler who is intentionally connecting with a person face to face, listening to their responses to questions, will have opportunity to hear the person's basic assumptions and challenge them with Kingdom assumptions. This same opportunity is not afforded in a deposit model of discipleship (i.e., a Sunday School teacher for an adult class of new believers will not have a chance to hear the worldview of each of her students).

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<sup>28</sup>Zachary, "The Role of Teacher as Mentor", 28.

<sup>29</sup>Henderson, *A Model for Making Disciples*, 145.

Disciplers should be astute listeners as well as have mature walks with Christ. Therefore training for those who will disciple should include a listening component.<sup>30</sup> They will love in such a way as to allow their new friend to be heard and valued (1 Corinthians 13). Another component is competence in 'how to learn'. A discipler should know how to find answers, what resources or resource people can help them fully respond to a friend's question. "Facilitators of learning see themselves as resources for learning, rather than as didactic instructors who have all the answers."<sup>31</sup>

The final essential component a discipler should have is a vital walk with Christ.<sup>32</sup> This person is enjoying a lifestyle of worship and mission which translates into emotional health and purposeful living.<sup>33</sup> The new thinking is that no longer does the discipler have to have gifts of leadership or teaching; neither does she have to have a seminary degree in order to help a younger sojourner. The following are four non-negotiables that should be true about a discipler: 1. he is equipped with probing and leading questions; 2. he is willing to be trained as an active listener; 3. he is a student in the truest sense of the word; and 4. he should have a growing and vital journey with Jesus.

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<sup>30</sup>Recently the network of pastors who participated in the discussion group, attended a workshop on listening. The material was presented by a past A&W restaurant management trainer. In the debrief time it was suggested that this material was relevant not only to leaders in church but should be a part of church membership classes and new believers classes – or discipleship.

<sup>31</sup>Zachary, "The Role of Teacher as Mentor", 28.

<sup>32</sup>Gregory states that a teacher must be the one who knows the lesson or truth or art to be taught. Perhaps it is true that teachers of the Gospel don't always "know" and practice the lessons they teach? John Milton Gregory *The Seven Laws of Teaching*, revised edition (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1991), 88.

<sup>33</sup>Peter Scazzero's series about emotionally healthy churches and pastors is a great starting place as a resource to create awareness about the area of emotional health within leaders in order to help develop healthy disciplers. Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2003).

## Discipleship Questions

The following is a list of questions a discipler can use in conversation with the disciple and a rationale for each question. It is not the intent that all questions or sections are covered in each meeting; in fact the list is not exhaustive as it is intended to stimulate further questions. It is conceivable that only one question from the whole five sections is used in a particular meeting. Each section is one of the five themes or purposes identified with communion. The discipler must be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading. These questions could be printed and laminated on a bookmark so that a discipler and disciple have it as a constant resource. The essence of sacramental discipleship is that these questions should be a part of regular conversation, with a spiritual diet that regularly celebrates communion (where each of these themes is remembered). "The pupil who is taught without doing any studying for himself will be like one who fed without being given any exercise: he will lose both his appetite and his strength."<sup>34</sup> The following questions invite study, conversation, exercise, and friendship. Sacramental discipleship is a spiritual rhythm, and if a believer participates in the rhythm, the believer will grow as a worshiper and missionary.

### *Section I. Remember Grace (Your Relationship With God)*

- a. Why did Jesus need to die?
- b. What does it mean for you to take up your cross today (Matthew 10:38)?
- c. What part of Colossians 3:1-17 is speaking to you today? What does it mean that you died and yet you still need to put to death parts of you?
- d. The new covenant is described in Ezekiel 36:26-27 and Jeremiah 31:33. Talk about the covenant and you (God's commitment and yours)?

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<sup>34</sup>Gregory's fifth law of the teaching process. Gregory, *The Seven Laws of Teaching*, 88.

- e. Your life is changing because God is living in you (Romans 8:11 and John 14). How is your life changing, and what is keeping you from enjoying growth?
- f. Discuss how the Holy Spirit makes the following happen in us: Philippians 2:5-11, new attitude, humility; Romans 12:1-2 new mind; Acts 1:8 power; Acts 2:17 and 1 Corinthians 12 gifts; Zechariah 4:6 new courage; Psalm 40:3 new song; keep building the Biblical list of what it means to be empowered by the Holy Spirit).

### *Rationale For Section I*

*Anamnesin* is a command to remember Christ's sacrifice and to encounter the living Christ. To remember is to celebrate what Christ has done, what He has done in your own life and to celebrate who you are today because of whom He continues to be in your life. The Eucharist is after all a means of enjoying and participating in His grace – this is a Wesleyan distinctive and is the logical starting place. According to 1 Corinthians 11:25 remembering was to occur “whenever you drink it.” Question I.a above then is a necessary on-going question. A believer should consistently remember why and how Jesus died, as this is the nature of the word *anamnesin*: Christ's sacrifice is perfect and complete and He appears as the Lamb who was slain. Our opportunity is to reflect on His sacrifice, and participate in it.

Question I.b highlights the responsibility a believer has in appropriating the work on the cross. I.c follows naturally as a believer receives the sacrifice of Christ as essential for her own life; she is also compelled into a lifestyle that reflects His sacrifice. Thus a believer should be asking if he is taking up his cross and following Christ daily. The discipler has a theologically rich springboard here to consider all that is implied in taking up a cross, and dying to self.

The cross is an instrument of death and the Colossians 3 passage in I.c can lead into what it means for a believer to die with Christ and become alive in Him. This same passage can lead to what it means to die and continue to die as a believer. In fact a question like this is much better served by a friendly conversation than in a classroom, as specific and immediate examples can be used to explain this theological reality. A discipler will hear a disciple's underlying assumptions about life (i.e. what the disciple believes about her *self* in relation to Christ's work in her *self*), as 'dying to self' is not a cultural value. The discipler will hear and discern in the conversation what the cultural assumptions are that will be confronted by this Kingdom value in the follow up conversation. Question I.d brings to mind the foundational experience of covenant. Throughout Scripture the people of God are commanded to remember their covenant with God. This question offers the disciple an opportunity to consider, repent, resolve and celebrate their present covenant relationship with God.

The final two questions are empowering. I.e invites a discussion about Christ's power pouring through a believer, and what it means to enjoy this infilling. Question I.f refers to an ancient hymn of the church. It is a synthesis of the sacrifice and triumph of Christ and how this should be reflected in our own "attitude" or lifestyle. The learning opportunity afforded in I.f is the exercise of opening up Scripture to discover more of God's transformative work.

## *Section II. Remember Your Identity (God's Ideas About You!)*

- a. Prayerfully read Psalm 51. What parts of this passage impact you today?
- b. What do you fear? What is destroying you?
- c. There is a CBC show called "Being Erica" where the main character is magically and therapeutically allowed to go back into her past and work on certain situations where she felt she had failed , or at least wanted a "do over." What situation would you like to revisit from this past week or any other time in your life?
- d. If Satan were to try to invalidate you as a person or servant of God, how might he do it today?
- e. Tell me about your ego.
- f. Zephaniah 3:17 reminds us that God is singing about you. Tell me about His song for you.
- g. Psalm 32:1-5 describes repentance and the consequences of un-repentance – what's described? Define repentance. About what do you need to repent?

### *Rationale For Section II*

1 Corinthians 11:27-31 teaches that the time of communion is an examination time. Paul says in verse 31 that we should "judge ourselves." To judge or examine is to be aware of ourselves. It is to be aware of our behavior and the motives underlying the behavior. Psalm 51 is a passage that walks the believer through a self-exam. It is a prayer to make us aware that personal sin offends God first and foremost. That's why it should be the first question in the discipline of self-examination. Question II.b probes not so much sinful behavior as much as attitudes or issues that paralyze a believer from moving forward. Shame, guilt and regrets are among the emotional health issues that should be explored. Asking II.c regularly facilitates appropriate and controlled introspection.

Question II.d makes a statement as much as it asks a question. The statement is that Satan is active in the world and, as the accuser, he works to "invalidate" individuals.

The next question explores the sin of pride and deserves our full attention.

Biblically, the sin of pride destroys family, destroys friendships, churches, even nations!

Question II.f marches the believer into the throne room of heaven where a believer is given a scene: God singing about her! The discipler in this question is beginning to help his friend understand that God has His own perspective on each person, and the journey of faith is one where we need to have God's perspective. The final question is included just in case the issue has not been made clear enough: repent.

### *Section III. Remember Community (Your Relationship to Others)*

- a. Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-33. What is Paul concerned about?
- b. Matthew 5:23-24 is a tough passage because it requires action on your part if you are upset with someone or if someone is upset with you – either way it's your job to take the first step. Are there any persons or situations requiring your attention?
- c. Read Matthew 6:9-15. Have you forgiven that person(s) that needs forgiving?
- d. Would anyone feel awkward about being with you, working with you, sitting with you at church? Would anyone not be able to call you kind, gentle, loving, Godly?
- e. Do I love the Bride of Christ (my local church being one expression of it)? Does she know it? How can I nurture unity at my local church this week? Read John 17 about oneness.
- f. Read 1 Corinthians 13 and score yourself out of ten on each item. Now be brave and have someone score you and your love at home and your church family.
- g. If you are married read Ephesians 5:21-33. Husbands, what is your mandate? Wives, what are you told to do? Couples, what does a healthy fight look like?
- h. If you are a parent, are you living worthy of your child's honor? What does discipline look like in your home, and what should it look like?



### *Rationale For Section III*

The meta-story of the Bible includes a people of God – His family, a community, one nation, His people, the church. In 1 Corinthians 11 Paul is concerned that the church respect one another otherwise God will judge the particular church accordingly. The alternative, which is not acceptable to Paul, is that there will be divisions in church. Christ's body should not be imploding and yet it is. The following questions should promote mutual respect, love and unity. Forgiveness and reconciliation require first of all a personal knowledge of Christ's forgiveness towards humanity. These have been covered in sections I and II above. Here in section III, discipleship attention can be directed to relationships and a believer's community of faith. Questions III.b and c are about both extending forgiveness and asking forgiveness.<sup>35</sup> Question III.d is less academic and like II.c it is relational, a narrative that can be discussed.

A section in the BFMC membership covenant states: "We commit ourselves to contribute to the unity in the church, cultivating integrity, love, and understanding in all our relationships."<sup>36</sup> It is a wonderful value because it is not passive. The member is committing to contribute to the unity, cultivate, and love BFMC. Questions III.e and f ask a believer if he shares Christ's love for His church and how he actively loves the Body. The final two questions offer the disciplee the opportunity to hear from the more mature believer about family: do Christian couples fight, and if so how? How do Christian couples discipline?

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<sup>35</sup>Several times each month I hand out forgiveness worksheets to different people. Forgiveness is a major issue and a maturing / mature believer needs to consistently prayerfully consider the state of all her relationships.

<sup>36</sup>BFMC Membership Covenant (2009).

#### *Section IV. Remembering God! (Worship)*

- a. Worship is a command (Exodus 20:1-6). Define worship. Why do we worship?
- b. Did your heart for God this week increase or decrease?
- c. Would those who know you best consider you a “worshiper”?
- d. What Scripture is speaking into your life today? Are you memorizing?
- e. Is your home filled with worship music? What sounds is it filled with?
- f. Read Psalm 98. What’s the new song He is giving you this week?
- g. Scripture speaks of clapping, dancing, singing, prostrating, shouting – tell me about worship in your life?
- h. Discuss the merging of these two concepts: worship and creativity.
- i. Can we know God’s voice? How?

#### *Rationale For Section IV*

Having remembered Christ, and examined oneself, and having talked, acted and prayed about relationships and community, the discipler is left with the two sections that encompass the first three: worship and mission. At this point the believer can say that “it is because I am a worshiper on a mission that I will remember Christ, examine myself and make sure all my relationships are God honoring”. Questions IV.a,e and g are theological statements in that Scripture is connected to worship. In Section IV the themes included in the questions are adoration, love (“heart for God”), integrity (i.e., how others see you), music and the concept of “new song.” The discipler obviously needs to have this true in her own life and then can help her friend “enter His gates with praise.”

#### *Section V. Mission*

- a. Prayerfully read Luke 15. Why should you read this chapter regularly?
- b. Read Acts 1:8. Have you exercised this power this week?
- c. Do you know your gifts – did you use them this week to further the Kingdom?

- d. Tell me about your personal ministry plan (your plans in worship, for your family, your health plans, your career plans, your S.H.A.P.E. plans).
- e. Where do you see God at work in your community?
- f. Read Matthew 25:31-46. What is God saying to you here?
- g. Are you too busy? Would your family agree with the answer?
- h. Discuss this concept: a sanctified imagination. How could having a sanctified imagination change your thought-life and potentially the world?
- i. Do you have a God-dream?

### *Rationale For Section V*

The major themes in this section are love for the lost, Holy Spirit empowered living and ministry, and gifts the Holy Spirit equips believers with to fulfill His mission. Luke 15 is Jesus emphasizing (a triadic formula) God's heart for the lost and the journey of a disciple to share God's concern. Luke 15 should be a staple in a believer's diet. The final questions explore the natural inclination not to be about God's mission. Once again, like worship, a discipler needs to be both active in her calling and prepared to hand hold her friend into mission living.

### **Conclusions**

There is a disconnect: the body of Christ knows the right definition of discipleship yet the church is not producing vital, passionate, worshipful missionaries - by the church's own admission. Perhaps by beginning with the most basic structures in the body (relationships among believers) the whole body could be reformed. John Wesley certainly is an example of this, as Henderson described the class meetings as creating a "massive

transformation.”<sup>37</sup> Cultural change can be facilitated by focusing intentionally on these basic relationships. A person’s story, her community’s narratives, symbols, metaphors, traditions, language all can be examined and reformed in every new conversation between friends who share Christ’s love. Leading and probing questions can nurture healthy relationships, and the discipler can invite his new friend into a dynamic friendship with Christ. These relationships are discipleship relationships, the church’s most fundamental building block. Discipleship is an intentional and organic process of formation through loving relationships marked by accountability, commitment, education, and encouragement to serve. Discipleship is lived within the context of church family. The primary purposes of discipleship are to help nurture vital Christian community, to foster proper worship of God and to help believers participate in His mission (worship-mission).

Furthermore, Christ ordained spiritual opportunities, sacraments that are designed to encounter Him, to experience more of His grace, to build faith, and protect the body. The sacrament of Holy Communion is therefore not only a monthly event, but its themes are meant to be a disciple’s lifestyle. The five major Eucharistic themes (remembering grace, remembering identity, remembering community and remembering that Christians are worshippers-missionaries) can help direct discipleship conversation. These questions exercised in tandem with regular times of communion (where these themes are a part of the mysterious encounter we celebrate with Jesus), will nurture personal transformation, hence leading to healthy church reformation. In other words: sacramental discipleship is a pathway for ecclesial reformation with the FMCIC.

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<sup>37</sup>Henderson, *A Model for Making Disciples*, 158.

## **Epilogue**

This work has evolved considerably in the past three years. Today the potential of sacramental discipleship is more than an idea but it is my ministry practice. I am a pastor and a mentor to two networks of pastors within the FMCIC. I have had the opportunity to begin to introduce the model into two FMCIC networks (that is approximately 18 churches). Furthermore, I have accepted a new adventure from God: to leave a church family of 12 years where we enjoyed tremendous health and the most wonderful friendships, to begin to minister in a considerably smaller church family in a larger city. I am excited to introduce these concepts to the leaders here. My prayer is that this work will begin a much needed conversation about reformation within the FMCIC movement. Clearly the model is not sufficient, but certainly the richness of the Eucharist and the command we must adhere to disciple, joined together can be a very potent opportunity for our churches.

## APPENDIX A: PASTOR DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### Session One

1. Defining terms (i.e. What are our desired outcomes for):
  - a) purpose of baptism,
  - b) purpose of communion,
  - c) definition of sacrament.
2. What is your understanding of Wesley's understanding of these two sacraments?
3. The use of / practice of communion in your churches?
4. The 'real' impact of this sacraments in your church life? If you never had another communion would it really matter?
5. How do you prepare your people for communion? What more would you add?

### Session Two

1. Definition of discipleship (i.e. ingredients or elements)?
2. Does your church practice "discipleship"? What would you like it to look like? What are the purposes or preferred outcomes of discipleship at your church?
3. How did Wesley disciple converts?
4. Can discipleship and sacraments intersect? How?
5. Does the FMCIC offer guidelines for healthy sacramental practice?
6. Has your board discussed church health? What is your 'method' of measuring health in your local church?

### Session Three

1. Sacraments are a means of grace and a command. Discipleship is a part of the great commission. Is it possible to connect these two commands?
2. What would be the potential outcomes of this combination (i.e. for the Kingdom, for local churches, for an individual believer?)

## APPENDIX B: 2007 PASTOR SURVEY

### Christian Leader Survey

Preamble: This survey was distributed at a Free Methodist Church in Canada Pastor Retreat. 15 pastors responded. The average size church was fifty people on a Sunday morning, and the average attendance range was from 20 to 140 people. Overall there was strong uniformity in the responses.

1. What is your role / job / position at church? (Circle all that apply)

**Lead pastor / Associate / Youth / Children / other** \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is your average Sunday morning attendance? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Do you have a formal "membership" at your church? **Yes / No**

*If you circled "Yes" then please comment on the following:*

a) What format do you use to bring new people into membership (i.e. classes, resources, interviews, etc)?

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b) How effective would you rate your present format?

**Not at all effective / Somewhat / Working well / Excellent**

c) Is membership important to your church life?

**Not at all important / Somewhat / Important / Essential**

d) Please very briefly mention major themes you cover in your classes:

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e) How many new people have come to your church in the past 3 years? \_\_\_\_\_

f) How many of these are now members? \_\_\_\_\_

g) How many of these new people are coming to you from other churches in town? \_\_\_\_\_. Explanations: \_\_\_\_\_

4. How many people have come to faith through your church family in the past three years? \_\_\_\_\_ a) How many of these are still worshipping in your church? \_\_\_\_\_

5. How does your church follow up with new believers (i.e., classes, visits, etc.)?

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6. How would you rate the effectiveness of your follow up of these new believers?

**Not at all effective / Somewhat / Working well / Excellent**

7. What would you do differently, if you could, with regards maturing new believers?

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8. Define "discipleship".

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9. Do you do this effectively at your church?

**Not at all effective / Somewhat / Working well / Excellent**

10. What would "Working well" or "Excellent" discipleship look like?

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11. Comment on this statement: *My church family has a healthy sense of identity*

**Strongly agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly disagree**

**Comment:** \_\_\_\_\_

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12. Finish this sentence: *The goal of discipleship is* \_\_\_\_\_

13. How do you nurture healthy community (i.e. church initiatives, programs, teaching, etc)? \_\_\_\_\_

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14. Comment on this statement: *Every Christian needs to be connected to a local church*

**Strongly agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly disagree**

**Comment:** \_\_\_\_\_

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15. Finish this sentence: *The goal of church is* \_\_\_\_\_.

**Thank you for taking time to fill this in!**



## APPENDIX C: PRACTICING LITURGY IN DISCIPLESHIP

Liturgy could and should be a part of the rhythm of sacramental discipleship. Discipleship is the channel through which discipleship themes are introduced into a believer's life. But the full potency of the Lord's Table is not only in understanding its themes, but also in the actual practice of taking the bread and the wine. Therefore, besides the five themes of communion, the actual ritual of communion should be introduced to a disciple. Below, discipleship is defined, and then principles are outlined to help adapt or create a communion service. One exercise that a discipleship relationship may consider is to create a communion liturgy using the elements of the service as outlined here.

Liturgy in contemporary church life is like inviting an old Godly sage to help explain the richness of the Eucharist. The sage reminds the congregation that they are a part of something old, but still very relevant and divine. The words of the sage may be unfamiliar, perhaps an old English, and his method of helping the congregation understand communion may not be reflective their of daily life (i.e. reading in unison, quiet contemplation, formal prayer, etc). But unfamiliarity does not make the sage irrelevant to his culture. Rather the sage offers a church family a marker or measure of their orthodoxy, health, worship and mission. For instance the sage invites the congregation to the Lord's Table only if they earnestly repent of their sins. Or he prays with the congregation that they forgive one another as Christ has forgiven them. The sage reminds the congregation of the Eucharist's essential elements, so he should be invited into the service often – John Wesley believed the communion service is a believer's "constant duty".

### ¶711 COMMUNION SERVICES (FMCIC MANUAL, 2010)

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The Lord's Supper is the one thing Jesus told his followers to do in remembrance of him. In Communion we look *in* at ourselves and confess the things that have gone wrong. We look *back* to Calvary and praise Jesus for his death for us. We look *up* to his risen presence, longing to nourish us through the bread and cup which he said were his body and blood. We look *around* in love and fellowship with other guests at God's table. We look *forward* to his return at the end of all history, the marriage supper of the Lamb, of which every Communion is a foretaste. And then we look *out* to a needy world; Communion is battle rations for Christian soldiers. [Adapted slightly from Michael Green, *One to One* (Moorings, 1995) p. 102]

The means of distributing the communion elements is left to the discretion of those administering the sacrament.

#### **PRINCIPLES FOR ADAPTING COMMUNION SERVICES**

There may be contexts where the use of a printed communion ritual would unduly encumber worship (e.g. in a cultural grouping far different from that in which the present services arose). To ensure that the communion service that is used is faithful to our

collective understandings of the Lord's Supper, pastors should consider the following principles:

- Does the service express both great joy and a sense of the presence of Christ (which will, of course, produce the proper "reverence")? If we are faithful to what the scriptures and church history reveal about communion in the earliest days, the service will be more a joyful celebration of the living presence of Christ (with awe at the immensity of his love) than it will be primarily a penitential service.
- Does the service tell the story of God's saving acts from the scriptures of Old and New Testament as happens well in "the Great Thanksgiving" in the first service provided on the next page?
- Does the service contain the various components of deep intimacy (communion) with the holy, saving God: expressions of repentance, desire for cleansing, expressions of thanksgiving?
- Does the service balance the various dimensions of Communion (i.e. looking *in*, looking *back*, looking *up*, looking *around*, looking *forward*, and looking *out*? (See introduction to Communion above.)
- Does the service incorporate the prayers of the church over the years (which have been carefully formulated so as to convey the truth of the sacrament), especially the prayer of approach and the prayers of consecration, and the Biblical words of distribution?

Leaders without great experience or education in worship would be wise to interact with seasoned church leaders when making plans to innovate. Two time-tested rituals that are suitable for use in Free Methodist Churches are provided in bulletin/folder format ready for photocopying.

### **For Further Study:**

Robert E. Webber. *Liturgical Evangelism: Worship as Outreach and Nurture*. Florida: Moorehouse Publishing, 1992.

Brett S. Provance. *Pocket Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*. Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2009.

Richard Giles. *Creating Uncommon Worship: Transforming the Liturgy of the Eucharist*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004.

A FMCIC liturgy for children from FMCIC Manual:

<http://fmc-canada.org/en/component/content/article/4-position-papers/274-communion-service-for-children>

## APPENDIX D: DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

### Section I. Remember Grace (Your Relationship With God)

- a. Why did Jesus need to die?
- b. What does it mean for you to take up your cross today (Matthew 10:38)?
- c. What part of Colossians 3:1-17 is speaking to you today? What does it mean that you died and yet you still need to put to death parts of you?
- d. The new covenant is described in Ezekiel 36:26-27 and Jeremiah 31:33. Talk about the covenant and you (God's commitment and yours)?
- e. Your life is changing because God is living in you (Romans 8:11 and John 14). How is your life changing, and what is keeping you from enjoying growth?
- f. Discuss how the Holy Spirit makes the following happen in us: Philippians 2:5-11, new attitude, humility; Romans 12:1-2 new mind; Acts 1:8 power; Acts 2:17 and 1 Corinthians 12 gifts; Zechariah 4:6 new courage; Psalm 40:3 new song; keep building the Biblical list of what it means to be empowered by the Holy Spirit).

### Section II. Remember Your Identity (God's Ideas About You!)

- a. Prayerfully read Psalm 51. What parts of this passage impact you today?
- b. What do you fear? What is destroying you?
- c. There is a CBC show called "Being Erica" where the main character is magically and therapeutically allowed to go back into her past and work on certain situations where she felt she had failed, or at least wanted a "do over." What situation would you like to revisit from this past week or any other time in your life?
- d. If Satan were to try to invalidate you as a person or servant of God, how might he do it today?
- e. Tell me about your ego.
- f. Zephaniah 3:17 reminds us that God is singing about you. Tell me about His song for you.
- g. Psalm 32:1-5 describes repentance and the consequences of un-repentance – what's described? Define repentance. About what do you need to repent?

### Section III. Remember Community (Your Relationship to Others)

- a. Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-33. What is Paul concerned about?
- b. Matthew 5:23-24 is a tough passage because it requires action on your part if you are upset with someone or if someone is upset with you – either way it's your job to take the first step. Are there any persons or situations requiring your attention?
- c. Read Matthew 6:9-15. Have you forgiven that person(s) that needs forgiving?
- d. Would anyone feel awkward about being with you, working with you, sitting with you at church? Would anyone not be able to call you kind, gentle, loving, Godly?

- e. Do I love the Bride of Christ (my local church being one expression of it)? Does she know it? How can I nurture unity at my local church this week? Read John 17 about oneness.
- f. Read 1 Corinthians 13 and score yourself out of ten on each item. Now be brave and have someone score you and your love at home and your church family.
- g. If you are married read Ephesians 5:21-33. Husbands, what is your mandate? Wives, what are you told to do? Couples, what does a healthy fight look like?
- h. If you are a parent, are you living worthy of your child's honor? What does discipline look like in your home, and what should it look like?

#### **Section IV. Remembering God! (Worship)**

- a. Worship is a command (Exodus 20:1-6). Define worship. Why do we worship?
- b. Did your heart for God this week increase or decrease?
- c. Would those who know you best consider you a "worshiper"?
- d. What Scripture is speaking into your life today? Are you memorizing?
- e. Is your home filled with worship music? What sounds is it filled with?
- f. Read Psalm 98. What's the new song He is giving you this week?
- g. Scripture speaks of clapping, dancing, singing, prostrating, shouting – tell me about worship in your life?
- h. Discuss the merging of these two concepts: worship and creativity.
- i. Can we know God's voice? How?

#### **Section V. Mission**

- a. Prayerfully read Luke 15. Why should you read this chapter regularly?
- b. Read Acts 1:8. Have you exercised this power this week?
- c. Do you know your gifts – did you use them this week to further the Kingdom?
- d. Tell me about your personal ministry plan (your plans in worship, for your family, your health plans, your career plans, and your S.H.A.P.E. plans).
- e. Where do you see God at work in your community?
- f. Read Matthew 25:31-46. What is God saying to you here?
- g. Are you too busy? Would your family agree with the answer?
- h. Discuss this concept: a sanctified imagination. How could having a sanctified imagination change your thought-life and potentially the world?
- i. Do you have a God-dream?

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## VITA

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### *Professional Experience:*

2010 – Present	Lead Pastor Whitby Free Methodist Church
1998 – 2010	Lead Pastor Barrie Free Methodist Church
1994 – 1998	Associate & Interim Lead Pastor Trulls Road Free Methodist Church
1992 – 1994	Associate Pastor Richmond Hill Free Methodist Church
1986 – 1994	Residential Counselor Christian Horizons

### *Educational Experiences:*

B.A. (Psychology)	Carleton University, Ottawa, ON, 1990
M.Div (Marriage & Family Therapy)	OTS (Tyndale), Toronto, ON, 1997
Arrow Leadership Program	Graduated 2006
Doctor of Ministry	Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Charlotte, NC, 2011 (expected date of graduation May 2011)

### *Personal Data:*

Family:	Married to my best friend Karlene since 1992. Together we have 2 beautiful children: Abby and Greg.
Ordained (in FMCIC)	1997

### *Other Misc:*

2009 – Present	Network Mentor FMCIC
2005 – 2009	Network Leader FMCIC
2004 – 2006	President Barrie Christian Council
2009	Chair of Under One Roof, Barrie
2009	Ministry in Ghana, Africa (pastoral training)
1985	Accepted Christ's invitation to follow Him. I was in an old Ford Pinto, with a buddy! I have never looked back. The gift of life Jesus has given to me is more than I deserve and more than I imagined.